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- ★ 5 MICROWAVES, £89.99 EACH
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'APPY EVER AFTER!

HOW GOING ONLINE HEALED MY BROKEN HEART

JOANNA LUMLEY

TIME TO GET TOUGH, SWEETIES!

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AMANDA HOLDEN

Living with Alan Carr!

Size 18 to 14

Size 20 to 16

JOSIE & ALISON'S SHAPE-UP PLANS

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Contents

Well, Hello there!

Welcome to our first issue of 2023 and to January – the time of year many of us think about 'a fresh start'.

Did you know, an estimated 26 million of us will be trying to lose weight this week? We have tips and tricks from *This Morning*'s Josie and Alison on p10, reader inspo on p36, and Diet Trends on p30, if you are one of them.

A whopping 300,000 of us will attempt to go vegan (our cover star Joanna Lumley believes vegetables are the main reason she's never ill). They're cheaper than meat, too, so I'm giving it a try at least for Jan! Nothing ventured and all that...

The fabulous Davina McCall, p14, and *Loose Women*'s Judi Love, p68, recommend we try to laugh more. Good advice, ladies! As the saying goes – 'laughter is the best medicine' and I personally believe it's true.

As for the bills that are about to land on our mats, fear not! We have a seven-page guide by Money Mum Gemma Bird, starting on p53, that could help you save thousands by this time next year! And we have money and prizes for you to win, so get entering.

Welcome back to Planet *best*, everyone, let's all look 2023 in the eye and get life on track – the *best* way we can.

EDITOR IN CHIEF
SIOBHAN WYKES

• **Please let me know your thoughts, siobhan.wykes@hearst.co.uk**

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THIS PAGE: GETTY, JD WILLIAMS, NICKY JOHNSTON

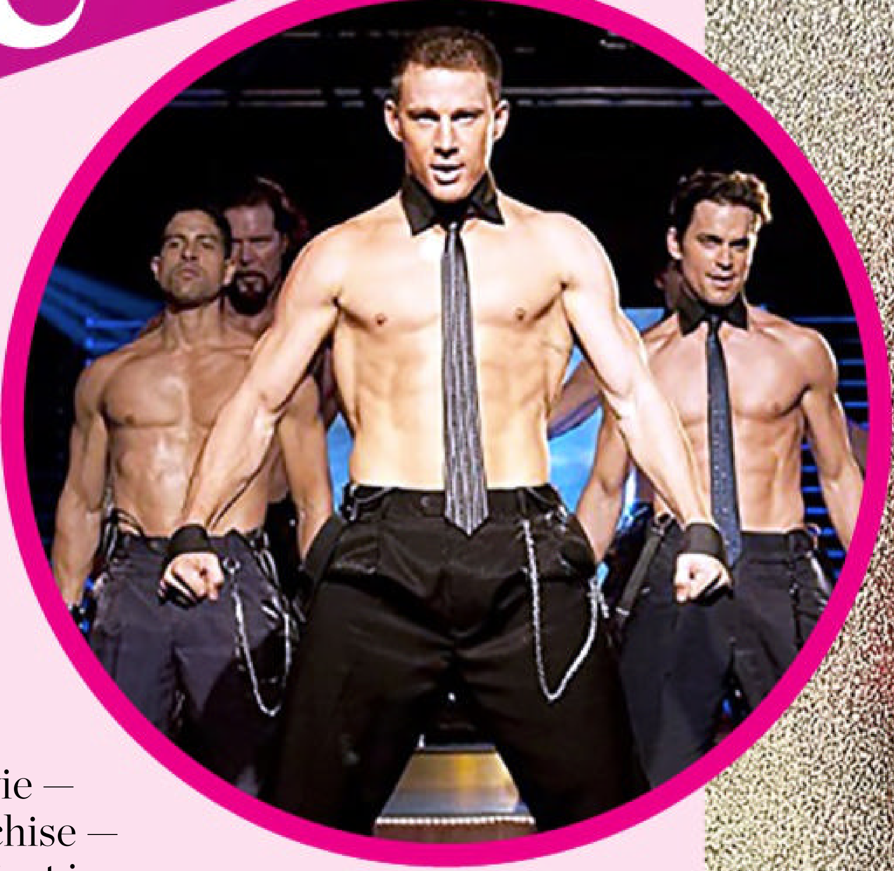
START YOUR

week with a smile

1

MAGIC TOUCH

It might be cold outside, but Hollywood hunk Channing Tatum is certainly bringing the heat. The new poster for the 42-year-old actor's upcoming film, *Magic Mike's Last Dance,* has been released, in which he stars alongside the gorgeous Salma Hayek. The movie – the third in the *Magic Mike* franchise – is set to be released next month, just in time for Valentine's Day. Count us in!



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Instagram/lisa_snowdon

4

Instagram/joancollinsdbe

Turning back time...

They ruled the screen in the Eighties, and when stars Joan Collins and Jaclyn Smith reunited recently, it was like no time had passed. *Dynasty* star Joan, 89, and 77-year-old *Charlie's Angels* actress Jaclyn posed for snaps at a mutual friend's star-studded party. Sharing the reunion pictures to her social media account, Joan wrote, 'TV's leading ladies of the 80s!' And they're still leading the way today!

WORDS: HELEN PIKE, RIANNE ISON, RACHEL COPE
PICTURES: *GETTY, INSTAGRAM, SHUTTERSTOCK*

Who wowed the crowd?

Smart meets casual in the revival of the bouclé jacket. Lisa Snowdon, 50, looks pretty in pink in New Look, while Patsy Kensit, 54, is chic in Chanel. Meanwhile, Ashley Roberts, 41, smartens up in a skirt suit from River Island.

Instagram/patsykensit

Lisa, Patsy and Ashley look tweedy cool in this season's latest trend

3

HELEN'S BIG YEAR

Fresh from her successful stint on *Strictly*, Helen Skelton is set to sparkle again in 2023, as the BBC's new golden girl. Helen, 39, is reportedly being lined up for big small-screen projects, including an 'outdoorsy, adventure series'. Plus, the former *Blue Peter* host – who split from her husband Richie Myler last year – will also present on *The One Show* and *Morning Live*. Go, Helen!

5

POST-PARTY PERK

LOCAKO
KETO COLLAGEN
BROWNIE BITE
Almond Butter Cookie Dough
Chocolate Orange
Peanut Butter Jelly
KETO

If you're missing the treats of the festive season, Australian snack brand Locako has got just what you need to perk you back up. Its deliciously low-carb Keto Collagen Brownie Bites are the perfect mid-morning snack or afternoon sweet treat when you're in need of a protein boost. The combination of pasture-raised collagen and MCT oil, as well as healthy nuts and pre/probiotics make these tasty bars perfect for an everyday treat. Available at locako.co.uk and Holland & Barrett (£2 each), these gluten- and dairy-free bars are available in three mouthwatering flavours: Peanut Butter Jelly, Chocolate Orange and our favourite –Almond Butter Cookie Dough.

START YOUR week with a smile

Now

Abbey's busy look might have worked a decade ago, but her pared-back style is totally trendy now

Fashion throwback

6

As a model, Abbey Clancy, 36, isn't shy of wearing on-trend fashion – but she's evolved from wearing *all* of the trends at once in 2012 to cherry-picking one or two for a seriously polished, glam look. Strike a pose,lady!

8

Nick and his team are here to declutter

DUST BUSTER

Nick Knowles is following the good old saying of 'New Year, New Me', as he returns to help families declutter their homes. The 60-year-old TV star and his team not only help those in need of clearing out their spaces and getting tough with them about what needs to be chucked out, but they also join forces to give it a jaw-dropping makeover.

Plus, there's plenty of handy tips on how to make extra cash from the clutter they get rid of. So grab your pen and take note…

● ***Nick Knowles' New Year Clearout*, Thursday at 7pm, Channel 5**

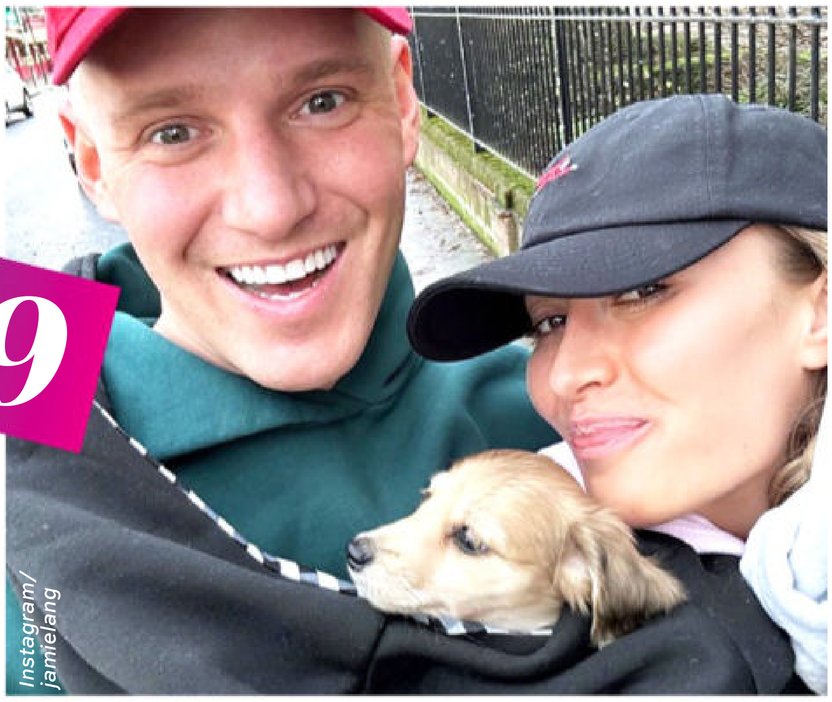
WORDS: *HELEN PIKE, RACHEL COPE AND RIANNE ISON*
PICTURES: *BBC, BSKYB, CHANNEL 5, GETTY*

7

HERE WE GO AGAIN!

Mamma Mia! fans, form an orderly queue. After two smash-hit films, it's been heavily hinted that Julie Walters and co could be back for a third movie. Director Ol Parker, who made sequel *Here We Go Again*, teased that the behind-the-scenes team always planned 'for it to be a trilogy'. He added, 'That's all I can say...' before saying, 'wouldn't it be lovely?' It's a big yes from us!

9


Instagram/jamielang

Puppy love

Former *Made in Chelsea* and *Strictly* star Jamie Laing introduced fans to his and partner Sophie Habboo's new addition – a puppy called Bobbie. Alongside a snap of him cradling the pooch, Jamie, 34, said, 'Welcome to the family little Bobbie.' Adding: 'She ignores me, sleeps all day, is awake during the night, and wants to cuddle Sophie and not me but somehow I still find her pretty damn irresistible...' We can see why!

10

SEPHORA
Hydrating vitamin eye masks
SEPHORA
Masque vitamine papaye
Papaya vitamin mask
VITAMIN C
SEPHORA
Masques yeux pastèque
Watermelon eye masks
SEPHORA
Masques yeux grenade
Pomegranate eye masks
SEPHORA
Masques yeux caféine
Caffeine eye masks
SEPHORA
Masques yeux concombre
Cucumber eye masks

CLEAN SHEET

What better way to start 2023 than with a little pamper? Indulge in Sephora's collection of eye masks infused with vitamins and super ingredients to kick-start your new year beauty regime. Choose between caffeine, cucumber, pomegranate, watermelon, aloe vera and papaya. Available at Sephora.co.uk for £3.99 each, the ultra-fine bio cellulose patches help to de-puff eye bags and banish dark circles.

The GC has shared how she's overhauling her eating habits with intermittent fasts and a plant-based plan...

GEMMA COLLINS: The Only Way is Vegan

Gemma's turning over a new leaf

Instagram/gemmacollins

'We're on a massive health kick in this house'

Gemma Collins has always been very open about her struggles, sharing her various ups and downs, especially when it comes to her weight.

And it seems the GC might have hit on a food plan that works – for she has reportedly shed a whopping three-and-a-half stone and is looking more confident than ever.

As we go into 2023, the 42-year-old reality star has revealed how she's hoping to continue with her health kick with intermittent fasting and following a more vegan-friendly diet.

The former *TOWIE* cast member took to her Instagram and said that she is keen to try more plant-based food and snacks in the future.

'I want to try more vegan treats, the GC is going VGC,' Gemma told her followers as she uploaded a video of herself tucking into plant-based snacks from company Nick's.

With her tongue firmly in her cheek, she added, 'You may think I'm talking shiitake, but I've been trying to eat more tasty vegan snacks.'

However, this isn't the first time that Gemma – who lost around two-and-a-half stone after taking part in *Dancing on Ice* – has gone plant-based.

She first tried it in 2019 and became a convert, swearing off animal products again in 2020.

In another social post, Gemma showed herself and her brother Russell cooking up a pasta dish, which featured tofu, pesto and Brussel sprouts.

In the footage, she said, 'We're on a massive health kick in this house. If any of you are out there thinking, "I want to change for the better. I want to cut down on meat," I'm going to show you how to cook this recipe.'

Gemma has also made other changes to her diet recently.

In November on *The Gemma Collins Podcast*, the star said intermittent fasting had boosted her confidence.

Sharing with her fans, Gemma began: 'This week I have been a good girl, I have been intermittent fasting. I've had to be a little bit low-key and say no to a few social events because I'm like "honeys, I'm fasting". I've been going to bed early. I've been getting my walks in.'

One thing we will say for the GC – she's all-in or all-out – and we wish her well in her latest health venture!

Work out the GC way

As well as making tweaks to her diet, Gemma also shares details of her exercise routine with her loyal social media following. After ice-skating kickstarted her weight loss and gave her a new love for training, the *Diva Forever* star has taken up power walking more regularly. She also takes part in personal training sessions, doing both cardio and kettlebells, and shares videos to her Instagram to give her followers motivation.

The GC is our gym-spiration

Instagram/gemmacollins

WORDS: RIANNE ISON PICTURES: GETTY, INSTAGRAM

War rations and veggie diets – just some of Joanna Lumley's thoughts on how to stay positive in a tough new world...

Time to get tough, Sweeties!

There's no denying it, as the New Year begins: times are tough. But actress and activist Joanna Lumley – famed for telling it like it is – thinks her generation is equally equipped to deal with it, 'Sweetie darlings!'

Talking recently, the 76-year-old voiced the opinion that women were once made of sterner stuff: 'If someone whistled at you in the street, it didn't matter,' she said, harking back to her early modelling days. 'If someone was groping, we slapped their hands. We were quite tough and looked after ourselves.'

Toughness takes many forms and people will differ on what harassment is and how it should it be dealt with but, whatever else, her attitude shows a resilience and self-reliance that many older women will recognise.

As for money worries, the former Bond girl knows how it feels – revealing elsewhere last year that when she first hit the big-time in the late Sixties, playing Purdey in *The New Avengers*, she barely had a penny to her name. 'Even when my name was well known, my bank balance was in the red. People can't imagine that. They think with fame comes mass money, which of course it doesn't.'

Joanna has also suggested we 'think a bit harder' and maybe use a form of 'war-time rationing' to help save the planet and deal with the climate change issues.

Motherland hit Joanna believes that every plastic bottle we don't buy, every piece of litter we pick up, every piece of meat we don't eat will count.

'At some stage, I think we might have to go back to some kind of system of rationing, where you're given a certain number of points and it's up to you how to spend them.'

As for looking as glamorous as she does, the *Ab Fab* icon revealed, 'I am never ill' – putting her rude health down to a secret she's followed for around 40 years – being a vegetarian.

Adding that diets in poorer countries are the ones she prefers because of her love of vegetables, she said: 'I suddenly thought, I am not going to do this anymore. I am not going to eat meat or fish. No more. Finished. Gone. But I am not a vegan. That is the next step, but I love cheese.'

Looking good on a cheaper diet is certainly a good tip this year! This feisty free spirit's no-nonsense, uber-practical attitude to life sounds spot-on to us. Perhaps Joanna Lumley's is the *Absolutely Fabulous* generation we all need to take inspiration from this year...

Bringing the laughs in *Absolutely Fabulous* with Jennifer Saunders (left)

Guest-starring in comedy *Motherland*

'Going vegan is the next step, but I love cheese...'

PICTURES: BBC, EYEVINE, GETTY

Slim down with Alison & Josie

This Morning's Alison Hammond and Josie Gibson are best pals – and shape-up buddies, too – so how have the presenters lost those pounds?

Their warm, laughter-filled friendship has melted hearts of viewers across the land – but not only are *This Morning* presenters Alison Hammond and Josie Gibson best buds, they've also seriously slimmed down and are looking fabulous as they head into 2023.

In a gorgeous backstage snap taken at last November's ITV Palooza event at London's Royal Festival Hall, the glamorous pair – both in black – looked like shadows of their former selves.

Alison, 47, looked chic in a pair of statement sequin trousers, which she teamed with a black blouse and matching sequin jacket, while Josie, 37, looked equally showstopping in a black velvet dress that clung to` her gorgeous curves.

Captioning the snap, Josie wrote: 'With my girl @alisonhammond55 look how smokin hot she is' – speak for yourself, Josie!

Both the ladies have had big weight-loss journeys to contend with.

Alison, who previously admitted to weighing 'more than 20st', had a gastric band fitted in 2007, following a 'mortifying' interview with one of her idols, Hollywood A-lister Matt Damon, which saw her girth break the chair she was sitting in as she spoke to him.

But sadly, though the surgery itself was a success initially, Alison has described the 'absolute torture' she felt, before the band was 'rejected' by her body and it was removed two years later.

The down-to-earth star's journey continued, however. In 2017, she took part in ITV series *Sugar Free Farm*, where celebrities were forced to cut sugar from their diet to see the benefits.

Recalling the experience she confessed, 'By day seven, I didn't want sugar any more. And when I did want a little bit of sugar, I had a tangerine.'

Back in 2019, Alison was unveiled as a WeightWatchers ambassador and the popular star has been very open about her weight, even choking back tears earlier this year live on-air, as she detailed her lifelong struggle.

But maybe she's finally cracked it. Turning heads recently, experts are saying she could have lost up to a whopping 5st from when she was at her biggest.

After stepping out at the National Television Awards last November, she was inundated with compliments.

According to personal trainer Laurel Alper (laurelalper.co.uk), the viewers aren't wrong. She believes mum-of-one Alison has undergone quite the shape-up since she was tipping the scales at 20st.

A fuller figured Alison

The star on *Sugar Free Farm* with Ann Widdecombe and Gemma Collins

Twitter/mikeyphillips

The glam girls at the NTAs

Josie now enjoys exercise

Laurel tells *best*, 'Wow, what a transformation! She's lost a stupendous amount of weight.

'I'd estimate around 4-5st. She now looks to be around a size 16. The bulk of her excess weight has disappeared, which is an amazing achievement.

'She must have completely changed her eating habits, and possibly even started doing moderate exercise, too, i.e walking more often and/or light weight training.'

While the TV star is yet to speak out about her weight-loss herself, she previously revealed she had made serious changes to her diet over the past few years.

Speaking on *This Morning* in January, Alison told co-presenter Dermot O'Leary and viewers, 'I'm going vegan a couple of days a week. It's tough, but I love it.'

As for Josie Gibson, who once admitted that she worried about being 'obese for life' and that 'nobody would love her', she has also dropped pounds recently. The mum-of-one's weight has fluctuated throughout her years in the spotlight.

But last year, Josie dropped from a size 18 to a size 14, by ditching stodgy food, drinking more water, doing 30-45 minutes of exercise at least three times a week and eating a healthy diet, all of which also helped with her sleep patterns, she said.

Josie also credited WeightWatchers for the changes, sharing a video of herself with the caption: 'I was asked to be part of @ww.uk and it's been one of the best decisions I have ever made.'

And the TV star spoke recently about loving her figure more than ever, maintaining that she feels more body confident after having her adorable little boy, Reggie, four years ago.

Josie said: 'I always try to look after my skin and use a really good skincare. I always live life to the max, I love to take full advantage of everything in life.

'I think after I had Reggie, I was instantly more body confident because your body has done something so spectacular, you can't do anything but love it.'

From where we're sitting, Josie and Alison are absolutely glowing with health.

We hope 2023 is your year, ladies – thanks for the shape-up tips!

New year, new you?

If you're looking to be, and feel, healthier in 2023, Alison believes cutting sugar from your diet also curbs your cravings, so you tend to opt for healthier snack choices. Meanwhile, Josie is an advocate of changing up your routine, including getting eight-plus hours sleep an evening, upping water intake – two litres is the recommended amount – and getting in 45 minutes of exercise three times a week. Challenge accepted!

WORDS: SHELLEY SPADONI AND RIANNE ISON PICTURES: GETTY, SHUTTERSTOCK, TWITTER

Warm

£39.99, New Look

£34.99, M&Co

£21.99, New Look

Parka **£119**
Jumper, **£34.99**
Trousers, **£39.99**
Boots, **£69**
All from Damart

£23.99, Amazon

£24.99, Peacocks

£45, Very

COMPILED BY: *LARA NUGENT*

front

Layer up to stay cosy all Winter long

£8, Primark

£9.99, New Look

£24.99, H&M

TOP TIP
Chunky knit cardigans are perfect for layering – go for a bright colour to help keep Winter at bay!

Cardigan, **£34.99**
Jeans, **£44.99,**
Both Damart

£45, Very

£65, Oliver Bonas

£4.99, New Look

£30, Accessorize

£39, Cotton Traders

£5.99, New Look

£24.99, New Look

DAVINA:

Laughter *is healing*

Davina McCall has been encouraging us to get healthy and happy for more years than we remember. So could 2023 be the one we finally say 'I can' and embrace the funny side of life?

Instagram/davinaccall

Davina divides fans with her daring fashion choices

Davina McCall believes in love and laughter as much as she believes in staying in shape. Even her TikTok strap says 'Just trying to make people laugh and smile'.

And she does (check out the 'Doing her best' TikTok with daughter Tilly). She has three beautiful children – Holly, 21, Tilly, 19, and Chester, 16 – and a partner – celebrity hairdresser Michael Douglas.

Despite losing her 'legendary' dad, Andrew, last March to Alzheimer's, Davina is always looking for positives.

Her dad, she says, taught her to love, live and laugh – and do what you can to stay healthy.

'It's a lottery... but I don't drink, don't smoke...' she shrugs.

Whatever ups and downs life throws at her, Davina tries to see the funny side. 'Laughter is so important,' she insists. 'My children are always saying, "Mummy, you're so weird, you laugh at everything we say", but that's because I think they're hysterical. Laugh a lot and everything feels better.'

Here, she opens up on her hopes and dreams for the 2023, and why she's not a fan of quick-fixes and broken promises...

Own Your Goals is all about fitness but you've said you don't want people to make it their New Year's resolution to get healthy. How come?

A resolution always feels like a short-term thing. You make this huge promise to yourself that you can never keep because it's too big. It's something to beat yourself up for in the middle of January. It can be harder to lose weight as you get older so it's also easier to get disheartened, which is why I would never encourage anyone to go for a quick fix. And you know, just because it takes a bit longer that doesn't mean it can't be a lot of fun.

It's hard not to get caught up in these ridiculous fads, though...

There is a lot of noise out there but all we want you to do really is to start as you mean to go on. We always say that getting fit isn't just for Christmas, it's for life. Resolutions are often about denying yourself but working out is about giving yourself a gift and enriching your life. It should always be a positive thing that makes you feel better about yourself. The great thing about Own Your Goals is that you can do it at home and keep trying different classes until you find what you love.

How do you approach things with your own health?

I definitely think in terms of long-term health. I guess after I hit 50 I was like 'OK, I'm more than halfway through my life now and I want to live a long and prosperous life for as long as I can. What do I need to do about it?' And guess what? The top two things that you can do to elongate your life are to exercise and eat good food.

It's never too late to start, is it?

Absolutely not! There is a woman that I follow on Instagram – Train with Joan – she's called Joan McDonald and her daughter is a bodybuilder in Mexico. I think at around 68 Joan had had enough and she decided that she was going to make that commitment to herself to start training, and her before and after photos are incredible. She's about 76 now and she's strong and she's living her best life. If Joan can do it, so can you.

The star's partner, hairdresser Michael Douglas

> **GETTING FIT ISN'T JUST FOR XMAS, IT'S FOR LIFE**

Davina always makes time for fun

LESSONS I'VE LEARNED

Read her book, *Lessons I've Learned* and Davina McCall will make you laugh and cry in equal measure. At 55, Davina is unapologetically 'bad ass'. She's been through a lot – early addictions to drugs and alcohol, estrangement from her mother, the death of her beloved elder half-sister Caroline in 2012, and dad Andrew last year as well as a divorce from TV vet Matthew Robertson.

Her advice for those divorced or divorcing? 'Don't waste time on regrets.'

On raising kids: 'I have to embarrass them a bit… I do feel it's in my job title.'

On ageing: 'It's nothing. It's just about confidence.

And laughter? Describing herself as 'half nun, half wild child,' she says: 'Always laugh, it's so important!'

Your ethos is very much about having a strong body, isn't it?

I exercise a lot for my mental health, but there's also something about having a strong body that gives me more confidence. If someone's had trauma in their life, or something has chipped away at their confidence and that's become a block to them feeling good about themselves, then strength training or boxing, or anything where you can let out a bit of aggression and anger, is incredibly cathartic. One of our trainers, Daniel, does this boxing which is like martial arts and it makes you very empowered. I love that feeling.

It can be hard to get started if you don't feel good about your body…

If you have been through something that has made you feel powerless, vulnerable or awful, and you hate your body, reclaiming it and making it stronger will make you able to fight off that feeling. It's like in some way you're protecting yourself with a golden cloak. It's your way of saying 'That is something I went through, but nothing is going to happen to me again.'

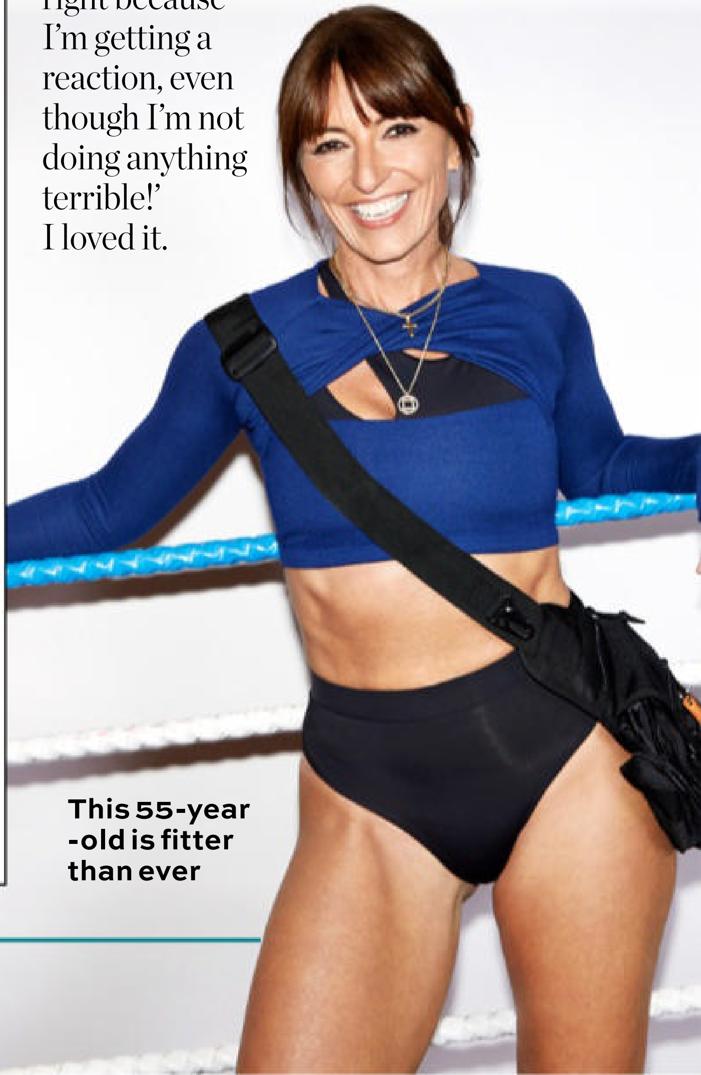
Are you enjoying your 50s?

It's f***ing great! I'm feeling like I'm getting to that age now where I am at risk of ruining my career on a daily basis. The only other person who I feel like is going on the same journey as me is Lorraine Kelly, which I'm really enjoying. I am at that point where I think 'f*** it'. Several years ago, I would have thought 'I shouldn't really say this or that because I'll get into trouble.

That must feel refreshing…

It is. I feel like at the moment it's manifesting with my clothing. I sometimes think 'What can I wear to really horrify people?' One of my favourites recently was when I was wearing a mini dress with no tights, which in itself is quite daring because you could see my little crepey knees. I was on the Tube and I was thinking, 'Yeah, you look at those knees because they are crepey and I don't care.' I also had white ankle socks and loafers on and it was brilliant because I felt like there were a few people that just couldn't handle it. It was as if I was wearing crotchless panties or something. I felt amazing though. I was like, 'Yes, I must be doing something right because I'm getting a reaction, even though I'm not doing anything terrible!' I loved it.

Get fit and feel confident with Davina at OwnYourGoals, available to access on-demand anywhere. Head to ownyourgoalsdavina.com and pay just £49 for an annual membership in the New Year sale. Davina is an ambassador for JD Williams – jdwilliams.co.uk



This 55-year-old is fitter than ever

WORDS: *JORDAN PARAMOR* PICTURES: *GETTY., ZOE MCCONNELL/AUGUST/WOMEN'S HEALTH. JD WILLIAMS*

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CAROL McGIFFIN

THE WAY I SEE IT...

Wise words from our feisty, fearless and funny columnist

My advice for a stress-less 2023!

New Year, New You

TIME FOR A FRESH START?

'My first column of 2023, and I'm still celebrating. No, not Christmas or New Year, but this week marks the third birthday of the podcast I do, *What's Your Problem? With Nick Abbot and Carol McGiffin* – which we started in January 2020 just before the whole world went bananas.

We are two shows shy of 150 episodes, which in the podcast world is a bit of an achievement because, although there are millions of them, not many survive the course – and thanks to our many thousands of subscribers for that.

In case you've missed out, in it, we "help" people with their dilemmas, conundrums and problems in, shall we say, a slightly less than serious way. I mean, we try, but mostly flippancy rules – but the listeners totally get it. It's funny, too. You should give it a go because it might, just might, help you get through the year with less stress.

So, in the spirit of the podcast, I'm going to dispense some advice in an effort to help us all get through what could be one of the most difficult years ever.

First up is, be realistic. I mean, don't try and be overly positive about everything. At the same time, don't catastrophise everything either. Most bad things will pass.

Believe your eyes, and not your ears. If you don't see it, question it. I've stopped watching mainstream news, which I think is on a mission to frighten, alarm, and depress every single citizen of this country.

Look at what you have, instead of what you don't. Get rid of all the technology and gadgets you don't really need. Especially the ones that purport to make your life easier, because they don't and they won't. Trust me when I say that eventually, they will make your life impossible.

Declutter. Having too much stuff is so stressful. Be brutal – watch Stacey Solomon's *Sort Your Life Out* for some inspiration.

And me? Well, I've decided not to stress about anything that Mark, my husband, does that usually annoys the hell out of me.

That's it. Now, onwards and upwards!'

I'm loving...

EFFORTLESS WINE

I have one gadget that was given to me as a gift and it is an absolute dream to own. It's an electric corkscrew. Not only does it save a lot of time, but it is simplicity itself. No more shredded or submerged corks. It's rechargeable. It looks great in its box. And it works every single time, no effort required whatsoever. Once again, cheers!

THE DREAM GADGET!

I'm loathing...

FREEZER FAILURE

While we were away from home, our electricity tripped. It was off for five days. Virtually everything in our freezer had to be trashed. I am still sobbing. I cannot bear to throw food away ever – not anything – and I will eat way out-of-date stuff rather than chuck it. In fact, I was willing to take a chance with it this time, but I was talked out of it. Probably a good thing.

GOOD GRUB GONE BAD

PICTURES: GETTY, NICKY JOHNSTON

My dating dis

After losing her husband, Michaela Lambert was dubious about trying dating apps, but along came Steve. Now she's helping others navigate the online world of dating...

The mum-of-two helps others to find love again

Flicking through the dating app, I stopped short. Him!

The man I'd spoken to for a whole month, the man I'd had the perfect first date with, wandering around Bath hand in hand, sipping hot chocolate, talking about the future.

Yet, after we'd kissed goodbye and I'd text him to say I'd had a wonderful time, I'd heard... nothing.

I was so shocked that, yes, I admit, I was one of those women who presumed something terrible had happened. But no, here he was, perfectly healthy, back online dating. I let out a sigh of frustration. And disappointment...

For a long time, I thought I'd never have to deal with the highs and lows of dating again. I'd fallen in love, completely and utterly, with an incredible man – then I'd lost him.

I'd first met George on a trip in Mauritius, back in 1997 when I was 23. I'd been born in the UK, but my parents were both from the island, so I was eager to find out more about my culture. Out there, I made friends with his brother, who introduced me to George.

Even though we had instant chemistry, we only got together after me and his brother were in a car accident. George was so kind, that I couldn't help but fall for him.

After I'd recovered, George, a musician, invited me to a gig he was playing on another island, and I agreed. The rest, as they say, was history. I was so smitten, I decided to stay in Mauritius.

I got a job as a teacher and settled into life over there. George was an amazing cook and we were head over heels in love. We had two sons, Marcus and Mikhel. I couldn't have been happier.

But it wasn't to last. In the run up to Christmas 2009, just six months after Mikhel was born, George had a strange cough. 'I don't feel well,' he confessed. When it hadn't gone by the new year, we went to A&E.

I wasn't too worried – George was always so active and healthy. So, when the doctor diagnosed lung cancer, I was left reeling in shock.

At first, George was positive. 'It's OK,' he said. 'They're going to operate. It'll be fine.'

But it wasn't. Over the next few months, the gruelling radiotherapy and chemotherapy wasted him away. His hair turned white, the weight dropped off him and he aged 20 years in weeks.

He sank into a dark depression, his fatigue making him ratty with the boys. It became more and more rare to see the old George.

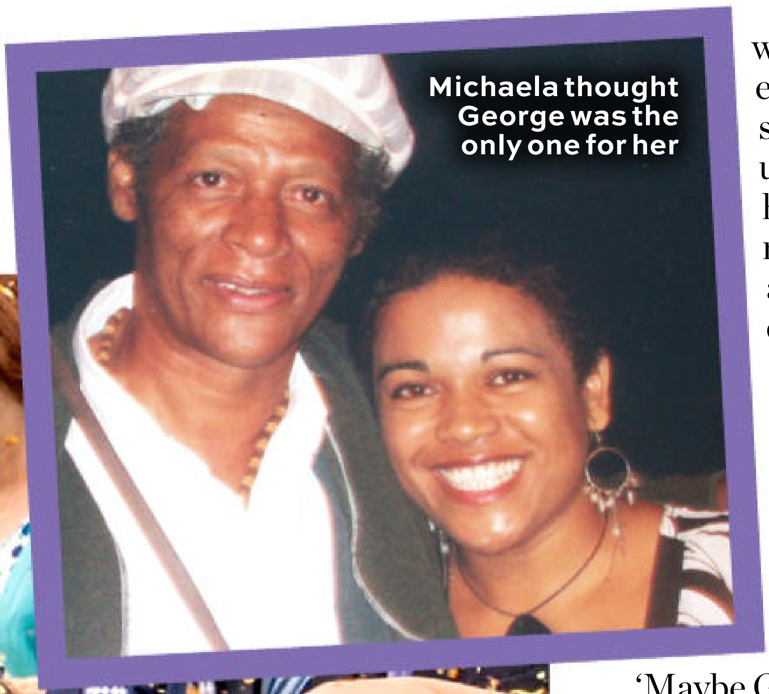
Still, nothing could have prepared me for when, in August 2010, he passed away. My own grief was excruciating – and telling Marcus his daddy had died was even worse.

At first, I stayed in Mauritius, going through the motions of being a mum, being a teacher, while my insides were screaming out for George. Everywhere I looked, there were reminders of him, of us.

I tried to be strong for the boys but some nights, I'd fall into shaking, shuddering sobs. Eventually, in August 2012, I decided to go home to the UK.

> **‘SLOWLY, I REALISED MAYBE I WAS READY TO START DATING’**

asters led to love



Michaela thought George was the only one for her

Michaela and Steve tied the knot in 2019

And it was exactly what we needed.

We moved in with my mum in Wiltshire while we looked for a new house. I got a job as a teacher, the boys joined nursery and school, made friends…

It was like a breath of fresh air had been given to all of us.

Slowly, I realised maybe, just maybe, I was ready to start dating. It had been two years since George had passed away and I was nearly 39. I didn't want to be alone forever.

'How do I even meet people?' I wondered helplessly. It was a whole different world out there. I didn't know anyone to introduce me to their single friends. So, taking a deep breath, I dived into the world of online dating.

It was utterly ruthless. There were men who messaged endlessly without ever suggesting meeting up, men who clearly had one thing on their mind. Then, when I did actually make it on a date, there were ones who abandoned me early, ones who looked nothing like their pictures – and now, this one who ghosted me.

'Maybe my chance has already gone,' I thought sadly. 'Maybe George was the one for me. The only one.'

I decided to stick to having fun. 'Relationships clearly aren't working,' I told myself. 'I'll just make a friend with benefits.'

But, of course, when I tried that, I ended up falling for the guy – who turned out to be married anyway! I resigned myself off men completely. That was until 2015, when Mikhel asked, 'Why don't I have a daddy?'

That was when I realised – I'd been doing it all wrong. I wasn't just looking for a man for me. I needed a man for my whole family.

So, for the first time, I thought about what I really wanted from a relationship. Top of my list was a family man. A man who was serious and solid, compassionate and tolerant, who had his own interests but wanted to share a life together.

Just a few weeks later, Steve messaged me. At 51, he was older than me and he'd lost his wife, too. He had twin grown up daughters, and the kindest eyes I'd ever seen.

He messaged and called regularly, was funny, asked me questions…

In December 2015, we met for a walk – and it was just lovely. We chatted like we'd known each other for years. For our next date, he drove me to a pub for lunch. 'Put that on,' he gestured to a blank CD. It was a compilation of all the songs and artists I'd mentioned I liked.

Each date with Steve just got better and better. He'd leave notes under my windscreen wiper while I was at work. He'd buy me flowers out of the blue. I'd forgotten how nice it felt to have someone to chat to about my day, someone who was on my team.

And because we'd both lost a loved one, we understood each other in a way few people did. I soon found that just because I'd loved George, it didn't mean I couldn't fall in love with Steve.

And just because I loved Steve, it didn't mean I still didn't love George.

In fact, after Steve asked me to marry him in February 2017, we went to Mauritius the following year, where I introduced Steve to George's family and visited his grave. We spent an hour there and silently, I asked for George's blessing. I didn't need an answer. I knew he'd want me to be happy.

And I was equally convinced when we got married in August 2019. I felt so blessed to have found Steve, that I wanted to help other women. That was why I set up my business, Your Second Soulmate – to show people who'd ended up single again in midlife that there isn't just one person for everyone.

That it is possible to have more than one soulmate.

● **For more information, visit yoursecondsoulmate.com**

> **'If there's one thing I've learned'**
>
> **The heart is an amazing thing that can hold – and give – an infinite amount of love.**

The pair found their second soulmates

WORDS: *SARAH WHITELEY*

We're ALL TALKING about

If you haven't had time to keep up with Twitter, Facebook or Instagram, we've done it for you...

JOIN THE CONVERSATION

Are you setting resolutions... or goals?

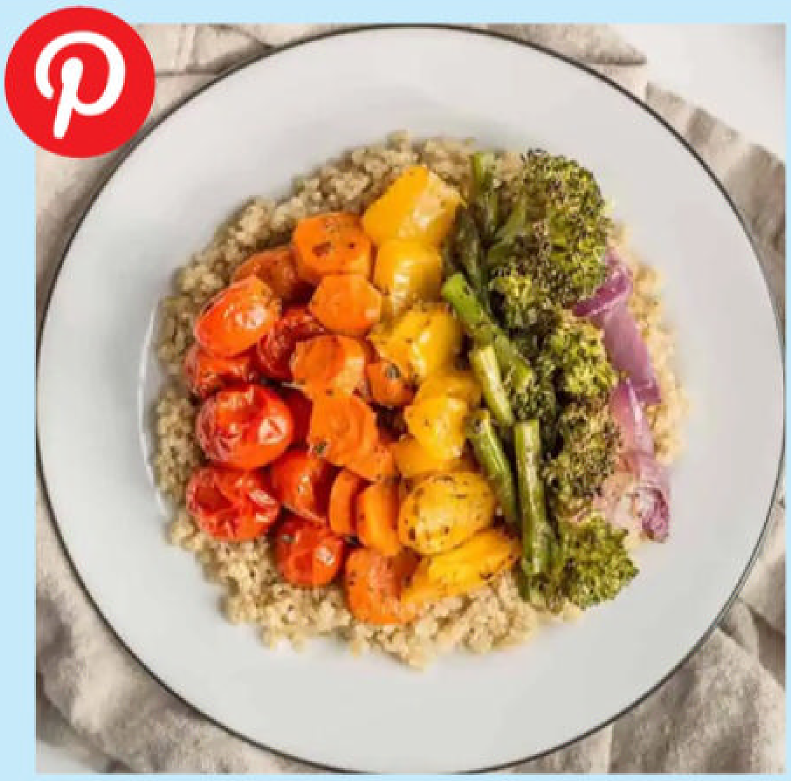
It's the time of year when it seems like everyone is making resolutions, vowing to shed a few pounds, do more exercise, drink less booze, etc. Yet, life coach Lynn Anderton says we're all taking the wrong approach. 'Set goals, not resolutions,' she advises.

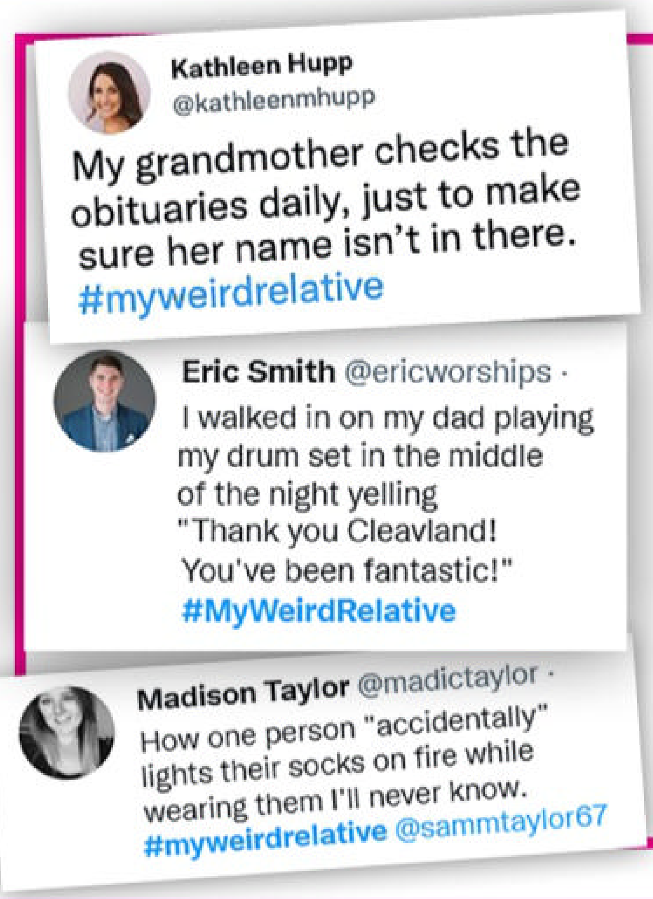
What's the difference? 'A resolution is something you want to change,' explains Lynn. 'Whereas a goal is about what you want to achieve and is usually done in steps like, what you need to do and when.' Which may explain why so many millions of resolutions, far more vague and hopeful, are broken within the first few weeks of being made. 'I know it takes a lot of willpower and motivation but if something is worth having, then a plan is needed,' says Lynn. So think about what you want to achieve in the next year – and how you're going to accomplish that ambition. Are you setting a goal or a resolution? Or are you quite happy the way you are, and making neither?! Let us know!

WHAT DO YOU THINK?
Tell us at facebook.com/bestmagazine

From plant to plate

'Veganuary' – when you avoid consuming animal products for the month of January – has never been more popular. Need some inspiration to add interest to your diet? We love the bright, cheery photography by Michele Cehn from **worldofvegan.com**, whose dishes are simple to create and leave us wanting more, like this rainbow roasted vegetables traybake. If this is what getting your five-a-day looks like, count us in!





Kathleen Hupp
@kathleenmhupp

My grandmother checks the obituaries daily, just to make sure her name isn't in there. #myweirdrelative

Eric Smith @ericworships ·

I walked in on my dad playing my drum set in the middle of the night yelling "Thank you Cleavland! You've been fantastic!" **#MyWeirdRelative**

Madison Taylor @madictaylor ·

How one person "accidentally" lights their socks on fire while wearing them I'll never know. **#myweirdrelative** @sammtaylor67

GOING VIRAL

Feline hungry?

Have you ever felt so famished you're climbing the walls? Well, these gorgeous little kittens have taken it to a whole other level – in this adorable clip, they literally clamber up their owner in order to get to their food quicker! The cheeky trio has obviously worked out their food is being served but, unable to wait until their plates are put on the floor, one jumps onto their owner's leg and hoists himself up to the kitchen bench. Not wanting to be left out, his two moggy mates follow his lead – quite literally! Thank goodness she's wearing jeans! Luckily, the lady seems to find it just as funny as we do, so it doesn't look like her cheeky cats are in too much trouble...

Find it on Instagram @ca_7t_s

Instagram/Ca_7t_s

WEIRD OR WONDERFUL?

Follow animals

Instagram/zsllondonzoo

No, not literally – but on social media. Studies have shown we respond with joy when we see adorable animal pictures or videos. And who doesn't love seeing – and sharing – a snap of a daft dog, napping tiger cub or a cute kitten (see our viral video story, left!)? So, for a happier newsfeed, try following animal accounts, like Bocketts Farm Park or ZSL London Zoo. You can't go wrong by starting your day with a cute creature – no matter what weird things they're up to!

FIND US ON INSTAGRAM AT...
@bestmagofficial

Going dry doesn't mean going thirsty

If you're taking part in Dry January or just cutting down on drinking, you can quickly feel sick of colas or water. Fear not, sippersdrinks.com is here for all your 'low and no' needs. Mojitos, Baileys, G&T... whatever your tipple, there's a tasty range of alcohol-light alternatives. Bottoms up!

Trending on Twitter

#MyWeirdRelative

After spending so much time with family over the festive period, we know we all have one... slightly odd relative. You know, we love them but they're a bit strange. Although these are old, there's a whole hashtag to show we're not alone!

FIND US AT...
@bestmagofficial

EVERYONE'S...

heading to the cinema in 2023

There are some amazing new flicks ready to be released this year, with something for everyone. We're counting down the days to *Barbie*, with Margot Robbie and Ryan Gosling looking incredible as the two living dolls, which will be released in July. If action is more your thing, *Fast X* – the latest in the *Fast and the Furious* franchise – is out in May, or *Mission Impossible: Dead Reckoning – Part One* will be in cinemas this Summer. If you're a die-hard Disney fan, there's *The Little Mermaid* in May, or if you fancy a blast from the past, there's always *The Super Mario Bros. Movie*. Plus, there's *Aquaman and the Lost Kingdom*, *Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 3*, *The Marvels* and *The Flash*... the list goes on! So get your popcorn at the ready...

WORDS: *HELEN PIKE AND SARAH WHITELEY*
PICTURES: *GETTY, INSTAGRAM, PINTEREST, TWITTER, WARNER BROS*

STEP OUT IN *January*

Looking for chic trainers that go with every outfit? We've found the perfect picks to lift your Winter wardrobe

£69.50, **Oliver Bonas**

£38, **JD Williams**

£12, **Primark**

£29.99, **M&Co**

Trainers,
£70, **Dune**

TOP TIP!
These low-tops will add a touch of glam to cosy sweats or smart trousers.

£39.50, M&Co

£50, JD Williams

£65, Dune

£18, Primark

£22.99, Zara

£49, Hotter Shoes

£24.99, TK Maxx

£22.99, New Look

COMPILED BY: *LARA NUGENT*
PRICES AND STOCK AVAILABILITY MAY VARY DUE TO JANUARY SALES

These three women are determined to kick off the New Year with some...

Bargain-boosting resolutions!

Stylist Lindsay buys designer gear for bargain prices

'I'll still shop – but second-hand!'

LINDSAY EDWARDS, 37, FROM BIGGLESWADE, BEDFORDSHIRE

'I love your jumper,' a friend commented recently. Stroking the silky soft wool, I beamed. 'It's Ralph Lauren,' I confided. 'I picked it up for £18 in a charity shop. It's still on sale now for £150!'

As my friend gasped, I smiled with pride. I'd always loved shopping, riding on a dopamine high whenever I bought a new dress or top that promised to upgrade not just my wardrobe but my life. I became a stylist and, as I spent hours trawling the shops for my clients, my love of blouses, bottoms and everything in between grew. I could easily spend over £100 every month on my addiction.

Then, I did a course on sustainable fashion and I realised, with a sick feeling, just how wasteful the industry was – and how bad it is for the environment - I couldn't continue to clothes shop the way I was doing in all good conscience. Plus, with the cost-of-living crisis, I had no choice but to start cutting back.

I hated the idea of giving up clothes shopping altogether. So, in January last year, I decided to still go shopping – but only in charity shops. The idea instantly appealed to me. I'd always loved charity shops anyway, and had often picked up items in them, while I was dropping off clothes from doing wardrobe edits with my clients. But now I was only going to shop there.

> **SO MANY CLOTHES HAD THEIR ORIGINAL TAGS ON**

I was amazed by what I found. So many clothes had their original tags on and as well as my Ralph Lauren jumper, I found a stunning top for £9.95 that still had a Macy's tag on for £109 and a gorgeous Carvela bag for £39 that was originally £150.

I was delighted with my beautiful bargains! I always made sure I wasn't taken in by the cheap price tag, still questioning whether it fit properly and was in good condition.

I cut my clothes costs down to £29 a month– far less than what I was spending before.

My youngest son is a massive convert and even my eldest son is onboard when he finds a 'vintage' sports jumper. And of course, my husband is delighted we have the extra money to put towards our rising bills. So, this year, I'll be making the same resolution and dressing well for far, far less.

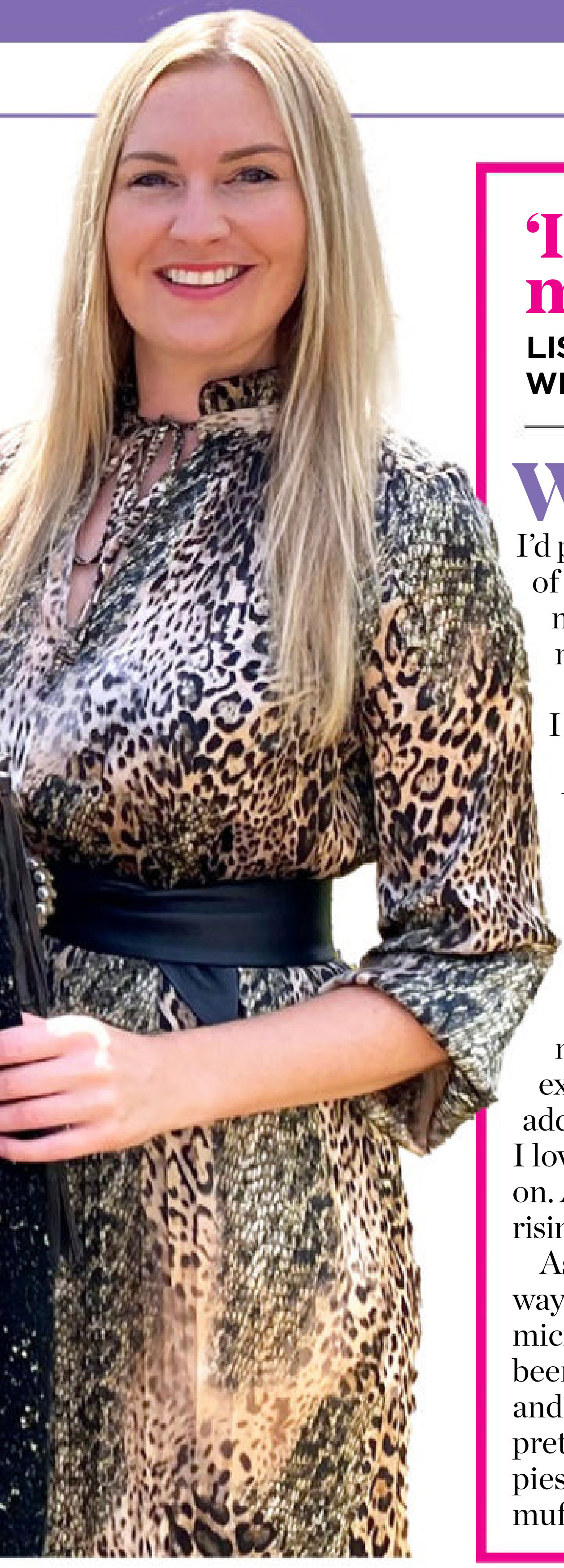
● **For more info, visit reimagise.net**

'I'll be doing it myself in 2023'

FENELLA HEMUS, 57, FROM BRISTOL

Whenever I look at my dining room floor, I feel a sense of pride. Years ago, I'd spent weeks sanding, scoring and staining that very floor – and even now, I glowed whenever I saw it.

Back when I first bought my house in 1996, it needed a lot of work and, with very little money left after buying on my own, I decided to get stuck into it myself. Over those first few years, I did everything – painting, building radiator cabinets and, of course,



‘I’m giving up my oven’

LISA MARLEY, 47, WHITSTABLE, KENT

Lisa’s making (micro)waves in the kitchen

Watching my mum, Margo, dig into the creamy mushroom risotto I’d placed in front of her, I gave a smile of satisfaction. ‘This is gorgeous,’ she mumbled through a mouthful. ‘It must’ve taken you ages.’

I shook my head. ‘About 15 minutes,’ I said. ‘I made it in the microwave.’

Mum’s face was a picture – a traditional cook who’d grown up on a farm with an Aga, she didn’t even own a microwave. In fact, it was only recently that I’d started using mine to do more than defrost or re-heat food.

As a plant-based chef and nutrition coach, I’m always experimenting with recipes at home, adding herbs, trying different flavours. I loved it – but constantly had my oven on. And over the past few months, with rising energy bills, the cost skyrocketed.

As I started looking for alternative ways to cook, the obvious one was the microwave. For a long time, they’ve been looked down on by both amateurs and authorities. Yet, you could cook pretty much anything in there. Cottage pies, potatoes, pasta, burritos, even muffins and brownies... It saves money and time – two of the most valuable things. Especially as average annual costs of a microwave is around £31 vs £300+ for your oven. And as I started experimenting, I realised all of my dishes tasted as good from there as they did from the oven.

> IT SAVES MONEY AND TIME – TWO OF THE MOST VALUABLE THINGS

Inspired, I’ve decided to take the plunge and give up my oven in 2023 – and my hob, too. In fact, I’m going completely waste-free in my kitchen to save even more money. I’ll plan exactly what I’ll eat each day, so I don’t over-buy, I’ll make sure I eat or freeze any leftovers – and even use up things like banana skins. They taste wonderful in a curry!

● **For more info, visit lisamarleychef.com**

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my floorboards. I even learnt a bit of plumbing.

I’d pick up magazines and follow the instructions, step by step. It was a real labour of love, and, when I’d finished, I felt so proud.

However, when I decided to get an extension a few years later, I had no choice but to call in the professionals. I had more money then and, realising how easy it was to call in builders and painters, I soon fell out of doing jobs on my own.

And the longer I wasn’t doing-it-myself, the more I lost confidence in my abilities. Now, though, my home is due a bit of a revamp and so I’ve decided that this year, I’m going to brush up on my old skills. After all, we all need to tighten our belts and, as a mindset coach, I’ve been focusing on how to deal with the rising cost of living positively.

Fenella’s happy to try her hand at new skills

If I can do jobs myself, why would I pay someone else to do it for me? Plus, I’ve really missed the creativity of putting your mind to something and achieving it.

With the help of YouTube, I’m going to start by sanding down my old coffee table and re-staining my dining table.

I’ll be polishing up my talents at the same time as my home, all while saving money. What better start to the new year could anyone wish for?!

● **For more info, visit: fenellahemus.com**

WORDS: SARAH WHITELEY

Great hair on a budget

Top hairdresser Michael Douglas shares his best tips from just £1.50

Want gorgeous locks in 2023? We've got proof that it doesn't have to cost the earth to have healthy hair. Michael Douglas, who has Davina McCall and Dawn French on his client list, reveals how to tackle your tresses. From busting shampoo myths to the £2.99 must-have styling product, he's got every hair dilemma covered...

1 WASH YOUR WAY TO HAPPY HAIR

Shampoo isn't a product you should be spending loads of money on. It's essentially soap and should clean your hair, don't expect more than that. Don't waste too much, either! Focus on the scalp and roots – when you rinse, the residual foam will clean your ends. Choose a sulphate-free surfactant formula that cleans without stripping your hair of colour and natural oils. I love the **OGX range (including Orchid Oil Shampoo, £6.99)**, which is brilliant value.

TOP TIP!
Practise portion control. A shampoo and conditioner portion the size of a £2 coin is plenty!

2 STYLING SAVIOURS

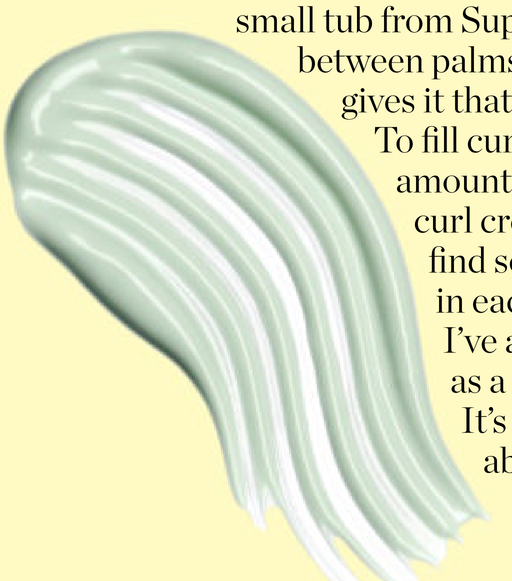
This is where you should be spending your money, but even so, you don't need to spend more than £10. If the likes of volume is on your wishlist, styling products will give you this, not shampoo. On the ingredients list look for 'VP/VA Copolymer' – this is what gives hair its hold. My go-to is **Wella Shockwaves Ultra Strong Heat Defence Volumising Hair Mousse, £2.99**. One important tip is don't disregard a product if you don't like it the first time. Your hair can change in condition each day so try it a few times to get the hang of it.

WELLA
SHOCKWAVES
VOLUME
MOUSSE

FAKE IT YOURSELF

Super savvy swaps

Some beauty products work well if you're strapped for cash before payday. As an alternative to serum and texturisers, a 5p sized piece of Vaseline (pick up a small tub from Superdrug for £1.50) rubbed between palms and squeezed onto hair gives it that styled, 'lived in' look. To fill curls with moisture, a 10p amount of conditioner is a good curl creme substitute. You'll find some of the ingredients in each product are similar. I've also used anti-perspirant as a dry shampoo before. It's the powdery stuff that absorbs the grease!



3 TOOLS OF THE TRADE

For a brilliant blow-dry, choose a round metal barrel brush with nylon bristles. The hairdryer will heat up the metal section, and this rise in temperature will help evaporate the water. The nylon bristles won't create friction, which helps to avoid frizz. You don't have to spend a fortune (*best* likes **Babyliss Copper Small Nylon Pins Thermal Barrel Brush, £7**). If looked after properly, your brush should last at least a year.

4 COLOUR CARE

If you're colouring for the first time, only go one or two shades lighter or darker than your natural shade for the best results. You're less likely to run into problems and it won't affect your skin tone, either (for example, darker shades can make you look washed out). All permanent colour should give you 100 per cent coverage on grey hair. Apply dye to the greyest area first. When covering root regrowth, wait until there's 2cm to cover, as it's easier to apply and avoid stripey bands of colour. My favourite, **Phil Smith Root Touch Up, is often on offer for £3**.

5 SKIP THE SALON

It's more cost effective to snip your split ends than to buy a specific product for them. Using hairdressing scissors, take a small section of wet hair and twist it like rope. When you do this, your split ends naturally poke out (if you're unsure, they have white bobbly bits on the end). You don't want to take more than 1mm off. Just make sure the scissors are sharp so it's a clean cut and doesn't cause the hair to split again. Need to trim your fringe? Comb and pull it up at a 90-degree angle away from the face, and gently trim upwards, not along. This creates a soft graduation.

WORDS: *HELEN PIKE* PICTURES: *GETTY*

Lesley Reynolds from the Harley Street Skin Clinic on why you should give your beauty routine a mindful makeover

Skincare Rituals TO SWEAR BY

Our skincare routines are an ideal opportunity to de-stress and lift our spirits. A little self-care can help us all feel so much better, and far from being a self-indulgent luxury, is a proven way to boost our wellbeing. Here's how to turn your regime into a mindful experience to give you a glow inside... and out.

STEP ONE

A calming cleanse

Swap wipes for a cream, oil or balm-based cleanser. Apply to your face, neck and décolletage using your fingertips. Rub in circular movements for 60 seconds on each area. This action will increase blood flow, which immediately plumps and rejuvenates. Rinse after one minute with a wet washcloth, then pat dry. The end result should be comfortable, dewy skin without feeling too tight.

STEP TWO

Feel good with 'foga'

AKA 'facial yoga', this is focused on toning the face. It can help ease the effects of strained facial expressions to leave the muscles and skin rejuvenated. It targets all the layers of the skin, increasing blood circulation. This allows more oxygen to reach skin cells. The result is a clear, healthy complexion with a beautiful glow. Spend at least five to six minutes twice a day to kick-start a facial toning programme. Once muscles are stronger, gradually reduce frequency. Or just try a few exercises every other day.

Ease eye strain

Rub your hands together to warm them up before placing your palms over your closed eyes. Leave there for two minutes while you breathe deeply. This will relieve any tension.

Smile smoother

To fight that sagging skin, hide the teeth with the lips to make an 'O' shape. Now smile widely, while keeping the teeth hidden. Hold the smile while placing one index finger on the chin and move the jaw up and down 10 times as the head tilts back slightly. Relax and repeat twice.

STEP THREE

Soothe your skin

Instead of rushing your regime, slow down and let the process become a nurturing session. Dot products on sparingly and take the time to massage into your skin, to maximise the effectiveness of each. Deeply inhale to reap the wellbeing benefits. Allow three to five minutes between applying products so they sink in effectively.

STEP FOUR

Night-time nurturing

Essential oils are made up of very small molecules, meaning they can penetrate deep into the skin to combat ageing, but their aromas also act on the deepest parts of the brain, which control our moods and emotions. Look for relaxing essential oils such as frankincense, sandalwood and lavender, and add a few drops into your bath before bedtime.

FEEL-GOOD SKINCARE

These skin-soothers deserve a spot in your beauty regime…

MINDFUL MOISTURISER

Embryolisse Lait-Crème Concentré Nourishing Moisturiser, £19.95, is said to be a celeb secret weapon. This simple, soothing lotion is great for all skin types.

Q+A
GRAPEFRUIT
Cleansing Balm

CHILL-OUT CLEANSER

Q+A Grapefruit Cleansing Balm, £9, nourishing and gentle, this melts away make-up thanks to its cocoa butter quota.

TOP TIP

Meditation has been shown to lower cortisol levels and help people sleep more deeply. If you need guidance, try an app like *Calm*, available on iOS and Android.

Aveeno
CALM+ RESTORE
TRIPLE OAT SERUM

SOOTHING SERUM

Aveeno Calm+Restore Triple Oat Serum, £15.79, smoothes and fortifies the skin's moisture barrier, leaving you looking rested and your complexion restored.

CALMING FACIAL MASK

Simple Hemp Ultra Calming Sheet Mask, £2.99

Formulated with organic hemp seed oil, vitamin E and omegas, this sheet mask will calm skin, whilst intensely moisturising it.

STEP FIVE

Mask & meditate

A weekly mask is the perfect time to nourish your skin and your mind. Meditate at the same time to help manage anxious thoughts.

Make your own mask to hydrate and calm skin. It's also packed with antioxidants to help slow the ageing process. Mash half a banana and mix with 3 tsp honey and 3 tsp Greek yogurt. Apply to your face and rinse off after 15 minutes.

STRESS-FREE SKIN

- **Think positive and look at day-to-day problems as challenges, rather than threats. Focus on the moment instead of multi-tasking. Say no sometimes and set realistic goals, so you're not trying to do everything. If you feel stress levels rising, smiling can help override the stress response.**
- **A balanced routine is essential for your wellbeing and will have a knock-on effect on your skin. Make some time for relaxation every day, in order for you to feel and look your best.**
- **Exercise for at least 20 minutes daily to release endorphins, which can banish anxiety and boost circulation. A fast walk in the fresh air is just as beneficial as the gym.**

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT LESLEY'S CLINIC, VISIT HARLEYSTREETSKINCLINIC.COM
PICTURES: GETTY, NICKY JOHNSTON

The top 5 20

WORDS: CLAIRE MCATEER PICTURES: GETTY

1. Circadian Eating

If you struggle with sleep, this one's for you. It's not so much about what you eat but when you eat – with a few extra lifestyle tweaks. The idea is you time your meals around your natural body clock, aka your circadian rhythm, so within the hours of daylight. You also work with your hormones to wake up with the daylight and wind down in the evenings. Experts currently think the healthiest circadian eating window is between 8am and 6pm.

THE RULES:

- Wake up with natural daylight, not your alarm clock. This takes a few days to adjust.
- Eat your main meal at lunch. Avoid heavy meals very late or very early in the day.
- Spend about 20 minutes exercising outdoors if possible.
- Aim to eat dinner around 6pm, avoiding alcohol and caffeine, leaving plenty of time for your body to relax before sleep. Limit screens too, to help encourage your stress hormones to fade and your melatonin (the sleep hormone) to be produced.

BENEFITS: Better sleep, metabolism and productivity.

2. The Full Diet

At last! A weight-loss plan anyone can stick to and doesn't leave you starving. Created by NHS weight-loss specialist Dr Saira Hameed, and a team of doctors and scientists at Imperial College London, The Full Diet lets go of the usual conventions such as calorie-counting. Instead, it gets you to tune into your body, knowing when it's actually hungry and eating the right foods to feel full, ie tasty, nutritious and unprocessed stuff. Think braised cod with lettuce, peas and crème fraîche, plus dark chocolate peanut butter balls for dessert. Yum.

THE RULES:

- Avoid sugar, but eat fat – healthy varieties of course: dairy, meat, oily fish, nuts, seeds and olive oil.
- Stick to 'one ingredient' foods (eggs, milk, natural yogurt, fish, fruit and vegetables, herbs and spices), which don't break down into lots of sugar in your body and cause insulin to spike. Low insulin levels mean your body burns fat, helping you lose weight.

BENEFITS: Lasting weight loss, lower blood pressure, Type 2 diabetes reversal.

3. The 1950s Diet

It was a time of no gyms, no skimmed milk, but no obesity crisis either. Despite it being post-war, many 1950s housewives recorded high levels of health and happiness, and experts think it's because they were forced to eat seasonally and locally. Items such as sugar were a luxury. Now people are harking to the past for ways to eat – and feel – better. Think homemade pies, soups and stews, and an array of tinned food for a 1950s kitchen. Ideal for your bank balance, the environment, and leaves you slimmer!

diets of 23

Looking to set your 'new year, new you' goals? We've rounded up the best diets of 2023 to try – from brain-boosting to purse-friendly...

THE RULES:

- Fill cupboards with tinned food, such as sardines, salmon, chopped tomatoes, even vegetables. You can buy these frozen too – cheaper and sometimes more nutrient-rich.
- Use labour-saving devices like the slow cooker and Pyrex dishes to create delicious, time-saving one-pot wonders.

BENEFITS: Budget-friendly, eco-friendly.

4. Mind Dieting

This is *the* diet to follow to prevent cognitive decline and cut your risk of dementia by up to 53 per cent – and that's scientifically proven. It's a mix of a Mediterranean diet and the DASH diet (which boosts heart health), and it's set to be huge this year as people look to protect their brains for a better quality of life.

THE RULES:

- Eat nuts, olive oil, whole grains (oats, quinoa, wholewheat pasta, brown rice), fish, beans, poultry and fruit and vegetables, particularly green leafy veg, and berries.
- Limit fried food, red meat, cheese, pastries and sweets.
- Wine-lovers rejoice. You're allowed a glass of red or white on this diet (just one!) as both contain brain-boosting benefits.

BENEFITS: Boosts mood and reduces risk of heart disease, diabetes and Alzheimer's.

5. The Galveston Diet

Hormonal changes during perimenopause and menopause can lead to stubborn weight gain around the middle that's hard to shift. So gynaecologist Dr Claire Haver devised The Galveston diet to specifically combat it. It involves eating anti-inflammatory foods your body will love and intermittent fasting (eating during certain times only). You'll enjoy meals like salmon with roasted red pepper quinoa salad – delicious and nutritious.

THE RULES:

- Eat whole foods: lean proteins, fruits, vegetables, legumes, whole grains, healthy fats, and full-fat dairy.
- Limit processed foods, items with added sugars or more than five ingredients on the label.
- Dr Haver advises the 16:8 method, so eating in an eight-hour window and not eating for 16 hours (a lot of which you're asleep for anyway).

BENEFITS: Shifts stubborn weight and balances hormones.

REMEMBER...

- Everyone is different, so what works for your friend might not work for you.
- Focus on *WHY* you're changing your eating plan, it'll help you stay on track.
- Allow yourself the occasional treat.
- Talk to your doctor before beginning a new eating plan.

JUMP START January

WITH DR MOSLEY'S FAST 800 PLAN!

TV doctor and best-selling author Michael Mosley's exclusive New Year plan can help you to success. Follow his Fast 800 calorie meal plan for a week – you could lose 14lbs in 21 days!

HOW IT WORKS

1

Prioritise a good night's sleep! Lack of sleep plays a huge role in how the reward centre of your brain functions, meaning it's more difficult to resist unhealthy food. Sleep deprivation may also increase ghrelin (a hunger-inducing hormone) and a decrease in leptin (the hormone that signals fullness). Aim to get an earlier night twice a week.

2

Pre-pack your lunch. A 2015 study found that fast food consumption and our eating behaviours outside our homes are risk factors for a lower diet quality, with higher fat and calorie intake. Eating on the go is convenient but often results in poor food choices. Pack your lunch ahead of time to avoid sugar crashes.

3

Staying hydrated by drinking water (and lots of it) is vital to the proper functioning of your body. It helps your digestive system to function, removing wastes through urination and bowel movements – supporting weight loss. It's calorie-free and keeps hunger at bay!

4

Regular meditation has been found to reduce stress, improve sleep and decrease cortisol (the stress hormone). Multiple studies have found an association between elevated cortisol levels and increased appetite, often leading to weight gain. Taking 10 minutes a day to be still and quiet can have a real impact on how your body manages stress, helping to control weight gain.

MONDAY

BREAKFAST

Quark and berry parfait: Mix 15g rolled oats with ½ tsp of cinnamon. Layer 100g quark on top followed by 30g blueberries.

LUNCH

Greek salad: ½ baby cos lettuce, 50g cherry tomatoes, 15g pitted olives, ½ each red pepper, red onion and cucumber chopped, 30g feta cheese, drizzled with 1 tbsp lemon juice and olive oil.

DINNER

Teriyaki salmon and courgette: Coat 170g salmon fillet with 2tbsp low sugar teriyaki sauce, marinade for 30 mins. Pan-fry for 5 mins each side, serve with 1 each courgette and spring onion chopped, pan-fried in 1 tsp olive oil.

FRIDAY

BREAKFAST

Cheesy portobellos: Brush 2 portobello mushrooms with 1 tbsp olive oil and grill. Top with 40g goats cheese and fresh chives.

LUNCH

Instant Chicken Zoodle soup: Layer ½ each spiralised courgette and carrot with 1 tbsp peanut butter, 2 tbsp tamari sauce, 1 sliced spring onion, dash chilli flakes, 100g cooked shredded chicken and ½ veg stock cube in bowl. Pour over 250ml boiled water, wait 2 mins before serving.

DINNER

Paprika prawns: Pan-fry 1 minced garlic clove, 1 tbsp each paprika and chilli flakes and 1 sliced spring onion in 1 tsp butter for 2 mins. Add 100g prawns, 40g chopped cherry tomatoes and 40g spinach, simmer until spinach wilts.

TUESDAY

BREAKFAST

Jalapeño omelette: Combine 2 eggs with splash water, pan-fry until bubbles, top with 30g spinach, 1 tsp chopped jalepeños and 10g grated parmesan.

LUNCH

Broccoli and ricotta salad: Chop ½ bunch Tenderstem broccoli, 50g snow peas, ½ baby cos lettuce and 1 spring onion. Top with 75g full fat ricotta cheese drizzled with dressing made from ½ tbsp each virgin olive oil and apple cider vinegar, dash Dijon mustard.

DINNER

Parmesan fish: Top 150g firm white fish with crumb made from 10g almond flour, 20g parmesan cheese, dash parsley. Pan-fry in 1 tbsp olive oil for 7-10 mins. 50g fine green beans.

WEDNESDAY

BREAKFAST

Blueberry thick shake: Blitz together 50g blueberries, 100g cottage cheese, teaspoon each chia and flax seeds and 200ml unsweetened almond milk.

LUNCH

Mediterranean salad: 40g spinach leaves, 40g chopped cherry tomatoes, ½ each red onion and sliced cucumber, 2 hard-boiled eggs, 15g shaved parmesan, drizzled with olive oil and lemon.

DINNER

Calamari in zimino: Pan-fry ¼ red onion, 1 tbsp olive oil. Add 150g sliced calamari, 1 tbsp tomato purée, dash chilli flakes, cook for 2 mins. Add ½ sliced courgette, 100g roughly chopped chard and 125ml water. Simmer for 15-20 mins. Sprinkle over fresh lemon and parsley.

THURSDAY

BREAKFAST

Strawberry yoghurt: Mix 20g almonds, 100g strawberries and 100g full-fat Greek yoghurt.

LUNCH

Lentil spinach dhal: Pan-fry ½ onion, chopped, in 1 tbsp oil, add ½ chopped chilli, dash each cumin and turmeric. Add 40g red split lentils, fry for 2 mins, pour in 125ml vegetable stock. Simmer for 15 mins. Add 50g chopped spinach, 1 tbsp yogurt, and lemon juice.

DINNER

Beef Stir-fry: 125g beef sirloin strips in 1tbsp olive oil for 3 mins, remove. Add 25g sliced mushrooms, ½ tsp minced ginger, Chinese five spice and 1 minced garlic clove. Add 3 broccoli florets, ½ chopped red pepper and pak choi. Return strips to wok, add 2 tbsp tamari sauce.

SATURDAY

BREAKFAST

Eggs with green soldiers: 2 soft boiled eggs, 6 asparagus stems.

LUNCH

Broccoli and cheddar soup: Add 3 broccoli florets, 1 small leek and courgette, chopped, to pan with 250ml veg stock. Bring to boil and simmer until veg tender. Add 40ml cream and 40g grated cheese. Cool, blend, reheat to serve.

DINNER

Spinach and cheese stuffed chicken: Combine 1 tbsp full fat cream cheese, 10g chopped spinach, chopped parsley and chives. Slice into 1 medium chicken breast and pack filling inside. Bake in moderate over for 30 mins. Handful rocket.

SUNDAY

BREAKFAST

Layered berries: 30g mixed berries crushed with 2tbsp chia seeds. Layer with 100g full fat yogurt, dash of vanilla extract. Top with 15g almonds.

LUNCH

Butternut squash soup: Peel and chop 250g butternut squash, fry in 1 tbsp olive oil until soft. Add ½ diced onion, 1 minced garlic clove, ½ tsp minced ginger and 250ml veg stock. Top with a dash of nutmeg and 1 tbsp yogurt.

DINNER

Low carb lasagne: Sauté 150g minced beef with ½ diced onion in 1 tbsp oil. Add garlic clove, dash oregano, ½ can tomatoes and 60g spinach. Layer with 1 courgette cut into strips. Top with 50g ricotta, 10g Parmesan, grill until browning.

FAST SNACKS

If needed:

- The Fast 800 Shake
- The Fast 800 Mushroom Soup
- Veggie sticks with hummus
- Handful unsalted nuts
- 1 hard-boiled egg
- 100g Greek yogurt and berries

WORDS: *ABBY KNIGHT* PICTURES: *GETTY*

PLEASE SEE YOUR GP BEFORE STARTING A NEW WEIGHT-LOSS PLAN. WEIGHT LOSS ACHIEVED MAY VARY.

VISIT THEFAST800.COM TO SIGN UP TO RECIPE AND MEAL PLANS.

Strawberry
Real food shake | 10 SERVINGS
the fast800
Chocolate
Real food shake | 10 SERVINGS
Coffee
Vanil

3 to give away

Win!

A NEW YEAR RESET BUNDLE

PLUS A FREE TRIAL PERIOD OF THE FAST 800'S 12-WEEK PROGRAMME

PLUS! A 20% discount for all best readers on The Fast 800 Programme for NEW members by using code FAST800. Valid 17 Jan 2023 – 23:59 28 Feb 2023.**

Worth over £214!

The Fast 800 12-week online weight-loss programme is an independently validated plan, with a variety of approaches to food and fasting to help members achieve weight-loss for better health, long-term. Working with Dr Michael Mosley, The Fast 800 offers a game-changing approach to weight-loss and healthy living, which is based on the latest scientific research encompassing diet, movement and mindfulness. The Fast 800 is one of the world's most popular approaches to weight-loss and better health. Through a 12-week supported programme, an ongoing monthly subscription, an engaging community and a range of products to support your journey, The Fast 800 is here to help you maintain a life-long healthy lifestyle. Visit thefast800.com/the-very-fast-800

Interested? Three readers will receive a Reset Bundle which includes a free trial period giving them access to the 12-week programme.

This prize is available to new members only. To redeem the 12-Week Programme, you will be given a 100% discount code to apply at checkout when you enter your credit card details. At the end of the programme, you will get a free month on our graduate subscription plan for ongoing support. Once you are near the end of the programme, you will be contacted by email if you want to opt out of continuing with the programme. You will then be charged £12 per month unless cancelled*. You can easily cancel the monthly subscription at any time before this. Winners will also receive three shakes worth £22.99 each, one shaker worth £9.99 and multivitamins worth £16.99. To enter, see right.

HOW TO ENTER

ONLINE: Save money by entering online at hearstmagazines.co.uk/best123a by 20 January 2023.

PHONE: Call 0901 027 2724 by midnight on 20 January 2023.

Calls cost 30p per minute, plus your telephone company's network access charge, and will last no longer than two minutes. Charges for mobiles may be higher. Phone line closes at midnight on 20 January 2023. If you call after this time, you will not be entered but you may be charged. Service provided by Spoke: 0333 202 3390.

T&Cs: Winners will be selected at random from entries received by phone/online. We will use the information you provide to process your entry. For our privacy notice, please see hearst.co.uk/privacy-notice. For full terms and conditions, see below.

The Fast 800: Giveaway terms: The prize is available to new members of The Fast 800 Online Programme only. To redeem your free 12-week Online Programme, you will be given a 100% discount code to apply at the checkout. Please note you will be asked to enter your card details, but you will not be charged at the beginning of the programme. Please visit thefast800.com for The Fast 800's privacy policy details. Once you are near the end of the programme, you will be contacted by email if you want to opt out of continuing with the programme. If you do not opt out, you will move onto our subscription plan costing £12 per month, and the funds will be deducted from the card details supplied. Offers can be amended or withdrawn at any time. *You can opt-out of the subscription at any time after the programme ends.

****Offer terms:** This 20 per cent discount applies to new members of The Fast 800 Online Programme only. Discount will be applied at checkout with promo code 'FAST800'. The discount is valid from 0:00 GMT on Tuesday 17 January, 2023 until 23:59 GMT on Tuesday 28 February, 2023. Promo codes are not transferable or redeemable for cash or credit and cannot be used in conjunction with any other offers. Offers can be amended or withdrawn at any time. **Hearst:** Open to UK residents aged 18 and over and callers need the bill payer's permission. To enter visit hearstmagazines.co.uk/best123a or call 0901 027 2724 by midnight on 20 January 2023. Entries in the incorrect format will not be considered. This competition opens on 3 January 2023 and closes on 20 January 2023. Entries received after the closing date will not be considered. The prize is a 12-week The Fast 800 Online Programme worth £119, Three shakes each worth £22.99, a shaker worth £9.99 and multivitamins worth £16.99, total prize value per person is £214.95. Fasting support products will include 1 (one) Shaker, 3 (three) flavours of Shakes (Vanilla, Chocolate & Strawberry) and 1 (one) Multivitamin. See the above 'The Fast 800' terms for full details on claiming the prize. Three winners will be randomly selected from the entries received. Entrants will be deemed to have accepted these Terms and to have agreed to be bound by them. This competition is not open to any employees of Hearst Magazines, the promoter or their immediate families, the promoter's advertising agency and sales promotion consultancy, or anyone else connected with the creation and administration of the competition. Only one competition entry, fulfilling the eligibility requirements above, will be accepted per person. Once selected, only the winners will be contacted personally using the contact details provided upon entry. Winners will be notified once selected. Winners will have five (5) working days to respond in full or another winner will be selected. Hearst Magazines' decision is final in every situation, including any not covered above and no correspondence will be entered into in respect of the validity of any such decision. Hearst Magazines shall be permitted to exclude or disqualify any entrant at any time at its sole discretion. Hearst Magazines reserves the right to exclude late, incomplete or multiple registrations, or registrations made by third parties or agents. Hearst Magazines does not accept any responsibility for late or lost entries. Proof of sending is not proof of receipt. The names of the winners will be available by sending a stamped addressed envelope to House of Hearst, 30 Panton Street, London SW1Y 4AJ, indicating the name of the competition. Entry to the competition and acceptance of the prize constitutes permission to use any entrant's name, image and any competition entry photograph, for promotional and/or editorial purposes in any format in print and non-print media without additional consultation. No purchase is necessary. Once entered, entries cannot be returned / withdrawn. Spammers will be disqualified. Prizes must be taken as stated and cannot be deferred although Hearst Magazines reserve the right to change the prize in the event of unforeseen circumstances and/or in line with current government guidance on Covid-19. There will be no cash alternative. We will use the information you supply to process your competition entry. For our privacy notice visit hearst.co.uk/privacy-notice. Hearst Magazines reserves the right to (i) cancel and/or withdraw this competition and/or (ii) amend these Terms, at any time without notice. Where Hearst Magazines runs a competition with a promoter such that the promoter is responsible for the selection and/or the provision of prizes then Hearst Magazines shall not be responsible for or have any liability for the provision of such prizes. To the fullest extent permitted by applicable law, in no event will Hearst Magazines be liable, whether in contract, tort (including negligence), breach of statutory duty, or otherwise, for any loss, damage or injury arising under or in connection with this competition. These Terms are governed by English law, and entrants agree to submit to the exclusive jurisdiction of the English Courts in relation to all matters arising under or in connection with these Terms.

PICTURE: *DR MOSELEY/FAST 800*

Put to the test WINTER WARMERS

Keep the cold at bay with our round-up of the best ways to stay cosy

SOFA SAVIOURS

MONHOUSE HEATED THROW

FROM £69.99

This has comfort and convenience in one product. Its generous size covers your whole body, with nine heat settings to get your ideal level of warmth. The soft fleece holds in the heat and, with a nine-hour timer, it works just as well on your bed too.

RATINGS ★★★★☆

NECK WARMER

£10, WILKO

A hot water bottle that's shaped to fit around the neck and shoulders, it sits where you'd normally wear a scarf, reaching an area often missed by blankets. The warmth also soothes any tension in this area.

RATINGS ★★★☆☆

EDITOR'S
FAVOURITE

THINGS2KEEPUWARM HEATED FOOT WARMER

£20.99, AMAZON

If you use a hot water bottle on your feet, this has the added benefit of fixed slippers on top. It feels like a waterbed – anyone else remember them? – and it will warm your toes delightfully.

RATINGS ★★★★☆

PLOOV HEATED CUSHION

FROM £89.99

Not taken by blankets? This battery-powered cushion is cordless once fully charged. Similar to a large hot water bottle but heaps cosier, it stays warm for hours and if you find throws a bit cumbersome, this is a great alternative.

RATINGS ★★★★★

WEARABLE WARMERS

PINK LEOPARD-PRINT FLEECE OVERSIZED BLANKET HOODIE

£29.99, NEW LOOK

At first impression, it's easy to assume this hoodie will be too thin to keep you cosy, but the fleece lining creates a halo of warmth. The pocket front and hood encapsulate the extremities and the bold print makes a statement!

RATINGS ★★★★★

FINGERLESS GLOVES

£14, ACCESSORIZE

Covering up to the middle of your hand, including your thumb, these have a *handy* way of taking the chill out of WFH. Leaving your fingers free to type, the thin, wool-mix material is soft and not too bulky for indoor wearing on nippy days.

RATINGS ★★★★☆

LIFESTYLE
EDITOR'S
FAVOURITE

BEURER FW 20 COSY FOOT WARMER

£41, ARGOS

This is the WFH companion that'll leave slippers in the dark. It keeps feet at an optimum temperature (choose from three settings) and in comfort, thanks to its teddy-soft lining. The cocoon it creates also helps with any achy pains.

RATINGS ★★★★★

2-PACK FAIR ISLE THERMAL SOCKS

£4, PRIMARK

Keep feet snug with these wool-mix socks – perfect for days out when the weather is chilly, or simply for days at home when you feel the cold snap. These keep toes toasty, insulating the heat within, but without making feet feel overheated and clammy.

RATINGS ★★★☆☆

WORDS: *RACHEL COPE AND HELEN PIKE*
PRICES CORRECT AT TIME OF GOING TO PRESS, AND ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Rachel Williams had tried everything to lose weight – but nothing worked until she changed her mindset...

I THOUGHT MYSELF slim!

BEFORE
16st 9lbs

Rachel was desperate to beat the bulge

I knew that my husband, Anton, was just excited for me but every time he mentioned my impending 40th birthday, I felt sick to my stomach.

'What's the matter?' he eventually asked, his voice full of concern. 'Let me help.' His words were to kind, I burst into tears. It may have sounded silly, but I couldn't face starting another year looking the way I did.

At 39 and size 20, I was overweight and painfully aware of it. I'd always been that way...

Even when I was just eight years old, cheeks and tummy rounded with puppy fat, my self-confidence and self-image were rock bottom.

Aged 12 and an adult size 14, my mum took me to a weight-loss group, but, as the youngest person there, I just felt even worse.

By the time I turned 15, I was a size 16. On the outside, I was bubbly and funny, making jokes about my size, always trying to beat everyone else to the punchline. Inside? I was miserable.

In September 2007, I got together with Anton. We'd been at college together, but it wasn't until we met up again when I was 26, that we started dating. By that point, I'd slimmed to a size 12 and, at 5ft 9in, I felt good about myself for the first time in years.

Six years later, in 2013, we got married and I fell pregnant that same year.

Queasy with morning sickness, I indulged my savoury tooth to settle my stomach. I binged on cheese and chive crisps, crusty bread, huge portions of lasagne... I ballooned.

So much so that in November, just before I went on maternity leave to have Sophia, a colleague of mine saw me and laughed. 'You're the biggest pregnant woman I've ever seen,' he remarked loudly.

And when I gave birth to Solomon in March 2019, I was bigger than ever. Two months later, I turned 39 – and was unhappy.

At 16st 9lbs, a size 22 and a bra size 40H, I hated looking in the mirror. I couldn't bear to have my photograph taken, even with my kids. Despite the fact that they wouldn't have any pictures with their mum, I couldn't bear being confronted with how I looked.

And every time Anton mentioned my upcoming 40th birthday, I'd cringe or cry.

In desperation, I signed up with a personal trainer at the gym in June 2019. A temporary measure, to kick-start my weight loss.

> “I LISTEN TO MY BODY AND WHAT IT NEEDS”

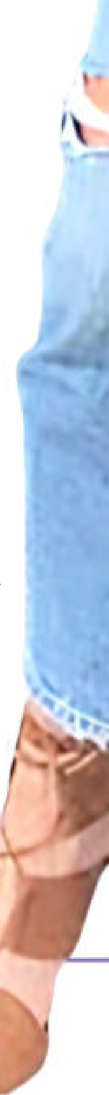
The weeks passed, and even though I was pushing myself to my limits, I'd only lost a couple of pounds. One day, on the cross fit machine, I burst into tears. 'It's just not working,' I sobbed, gulping for air. 'Why can't I lose weight?'

Next, after speaking to a nutritionist, I tried giving up sugar. Yet still, by the end of 12 weeks, I was only down a few pounds – not the stones I wanted to shed.

Mystified, I began reading books about personal development and bio-hacking, the concept of changing the environment to give you back control of your biology. I realised I was talking to myself in such a negative way, all I was focusing on was what I couldn't do, rather than what I *could*.

So, I started looking in the mirror, and rather than focusing on the fat, I started feeling grateful. Grateful for my legs that kept me active, grateful for my tummy that had held my babies, grateful for my mind that was forever learning...

And as I began to appreciate myself again, I wanted to nourish that person, give her good, healthy food.



NOW
9st 5lbs

Now she looks and feels fab!

The mum-of-two no longer dreads family photos!

So, I turned my new mindset to food and focused on what I could eat if I wanted to lose weight, not on what I couldn't… and there was so much of it!

I cut out all processed and diet food, and instead, made friends with my local butcher and fishmonger. They'd give me off-cuts to make stews and fish pies, and suggest new, cheaper options. 'The price of salmon is sky-high at the minute,' the fishmonger confided. 'But have you tried sea trout? It's just as good and far cheaper.'

Amazingly, it worked. Not quickly, but rather than berating myself for not losing weight straight away, I celebrated every pound I lost – after all, it was all going in the right direction!

By the time I turned 40 in May 2020, I was 10st 5lbs. Of course, we were in lockdown then, so I had to cancel the party I'd planned. But I still put on the size-12 dress I'd bought, gorgeous with long sleeves and white sequins, and posed for pictures with balloons on the doorstep.

By December, I was down to 9st 5lbs and a dress size 10. I'd never been so slim in my life, and I felt amazing! I was more alert, had more energy and could run around after the kids without getting out of breath. I even looked more alive too. My skin seemed to glow.

Now, I'm maintaining my weight. I concentrate on listening to my body and what it needs.

I'd learnt so much on my journey and I didn't want to keep it to myself, so I qualified as a health coach and set up my own practice, Rachel S V Williams Coaching, in April 2021.

I'm on a mission to help others lose weight, change bad habits and become the person they should be – all by changing their mindset.

At 42, I have thought myself thin – and you can, too!

My top tip for losing weight:

It's all about the mindset. Changing your thoughts from 'I can't' to 'I can!' makes a huge difference!

TYPICAL DAY

BEFORE

BREAKFAST
Breakfast biscuits or cereal bar

LUNCH
Sandwich, crisps, fizzy drink

DINNER
Lasagne ready meal

SNACKS
Crisps, chocolate, vanilla lattes

AFTER

BREAKFAST
Avocado and salmon on sourdough

LUNCH
Chicken salad

DINNER
Vegetable stir-fry

SNACKS
Brazil nuts

WORDS: *JOE CUSACK AND SARAH WHITELEY* PICTURES: *FOCUS FEATURES*

● **For more info, visit rachelsvwilliams.com**

Fancy a Friday Night *Takeaway?*

These tempting dishes are all under 600 cals!

Cheesy Nacho Burger

There's no need to pick up the takeaway menu – these Cheesy Nacho Burgers have got everything you're craving!

Takes 20 *mins* **Cook** 12 *mins* **Serves** 4

FOR THE BURGERS

- **250g 5%-fat minced beef**
- **½ tsp smoked paprika**
- **½ tsp chilli powder**
- **¼ tsp garlic granules**
- **¼ tsp onion granules**
- **¼ tsp ground cumin**
- **¼ tsp dried oregano**

FOR THE GUACAMOLE:

- **½ avocado, stone and skin removed, mashed with a fork**
- **3 cherry tomatoes, diced**
- **1 spring onion, trimmed and finely sliced**
- **1 tsp lime juice**
- **¼ tsp sriracha sauce**
- **Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper**

TO ASSEMBLE

- **40g lightly salted tortilla chips**
- **40g reduced-fat Cheddar cheese, finely grated**
- **Low-calorie cooking spray**
- **½ red pepper, deseeded and finely sliced**
- **½ green pepper, deseeded and finely sliced**
- **4 reduced-fat processed cheese slices**
- **4 wholemeal rolls, about 60g each, sliced in half**
- **30g sliced jalapeño peppers, drained from a jar**
- **2 tbsp light mayonnaise**
- **½ tsp sriracha sauce**

In a large mixing bowl add all the burger ingredients and mix together with your hands until the herbs and spices are fully incorporated. Divide the mixture into four, shape into burger patties and leave to one side.

Line a baking tray with greaseproof paper and make four small stacks of tortilla chips. Top with the grated cheese and pop under a hot grill for 1 min until the cheese is melted. Leave to one side.

Spray a small frying pan with low-calorie cooking spray and place over a medium heat. Add the peppers and cook for 8 minutes until softened and starting to brown.

While the peppers are cooking, spray a large frying pan with low-calorie cooking spray and place over a medium heat. Add the burger patties and fry for 4-5 mins on each side. Turn off the heat and add a slice of cheese to the top of each burger. Leave to one side to melt a little.

In a small bowl combine the guacamole ingredients, mix until smooth and season with salt and pepper. Spread a little of the guacamole onto the bottom half of each roll. Add a burger patty and top with a few of the peppers. Add a stack of the tortilla chips on top of the peppers, and finish with a few jalapeños.

Mix the mayonnaise and sriracha sauce together, drizzle over the top of the burger stack and place the top of the roll on the top. Serve.

SWAP THIS: Swap the beef for 5% fat minced lamb or turkey.

PER SERVING: 458 kcal / 39g carbs

Spicy Spaghetti Bolognese

This pasta dish is a twist on a classic, adding some different flavours and spices to the mix.

Takes 10 mins ***Cook*** *1 hour* ***Serves*** *4*

- **Low-calorie cooking spray**
- **500g 5%-fat minced beef**
- **3cm (1¼in) piece root ginger, peeled and finely grated**
- **3 garlic cloves, peeled and crushed**
- **75ml dark soy sauce**
- **2 tsp sriracha sauce**
- **2 tbsp white granulated sweetener**
- **6 spring onions, trimmed and sliced**
- **1 carrot, peeled and coarsely grated**
- **1 tbsp cornflour**
- **300g dried spaghetti**

FOR THE TOP

- **¼ medium red chilli, deseeded and thinly sliced**
- **10g fresh coriander leaves, stalks removed and leaves roughly chopped**

Spray a medium saucepan with low-calorie cooking spray and place over a medium heat.

Add the minced beef, ginger and garlic and cook for 3-4 mins, breaking up the mince with a wooden spoon, until the beef is sealed on all sides.

Add the soy sauce, sriracha sauce, sweetener, spring onions, carrot and 200ml water. Stir well. Cover and bring to the boil, then reduce the heat to low and simmer gently for 45 mins, stirring occasionally.

In a small bowl, mix the cornflour with 1 tablespoon of water until smooth. Add to the beef mixture, stir and simmer, uncovered, for a further 3-4 mins or until glossy and thickened slightly.

Meanwhile, bring a large saucepan of water to the boil and cook the spaghetti for about 8-10 mins or according to the packet instructions. Drain well.

Serve the spicy Bolognese sauce on top of the spaghetti and sprinkle with chopped coriander leaves and slices of red chilli. Serve

SWAP THIS: Swap the beef mince for lamb pork or turkey mince.

PER SERVING: 557 kcal / 70g carbs

TO ACCOMPANY (OPTIONAL):

- **80g green beans (+ 24 kcal per serving)**

Peri-Peri Chicken Wrap

We absolutely love a cheeky Nando's, and the PeriPeri Chicken Wrap is one of our go-to orders! Better for your budget and your calorie count, this fakeaway gives the restaurant favourite a run for its money.

Takes 10 mins ***Cook*** *10 mins* ***Serves*** *2*

FOR THE WRAP

- **Low-calorie cooking spray**
- **1 medium chicken breast, sliced**
- **2 tsp peri-peri seasoning**
- **20g red pepper, deseeded and finely sliced**
- **2 low-calorie soft tortilla wraps**
- **50g lettuce, shredded**
- **Half a cucumber, sliced into ribbons**
- **2 cherry tomatoes, quartered**
- **2 tsp light mayonnaise**

FOR THE CHILLI JAM

- **½ red chilli, seeds removed and finely diced**
- **2 tbsp honey**
- **2 tsp reduced-sugar ketchup**
- **1 tsp cider vinegar**
- **1 tsp granulated sweetener**
- **¼ tsp chilli powder**
- **¼ tsp smoked paprika**

Add the chilli jam ingredients to a small saucepan and place over a very low heat. Heat for 4 mins, until just bubbling and thick. Leave it to one side to cool and thicken.

Spray a frying pan with low-calorie cooking spray and place over a medium heat. Add the chicken and sprinkle over the peri-peri seasoning.

Fry the chicken for 5 mins, then add the sliced pepper and fry for a further 3 mins. Check the chicken by slicing into a piece and checking there is no pinkness.

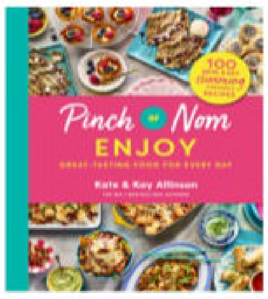
Heat the tortilla wraps for 60 seconds in the microwave and spread the chilli jam over the two tortillas.

Spoon the chicken into the centre of the wrap and add the lettuce, cucumber and tomatoes. Drizzle over the mayonnaise.

Fold the top and bottom of the wrap into the centre of the wrap, and then roll up from one edge to enclose the filling.

PER SERVING:
284 kcal / 42g carbs

Extract from
Pinch of Nom: Enjoy by
Kate and Kay
Allinson, out now
(Bluebird, £20)



'Turning 50? I hope it rocks!'

Peter Andre opens up about his two upcoming big birthdays, making it in movies, and why he'd never go into the jungle again

It seems like only yesterday when Peter Andre and his famous abs burst onto the music scene. But since racking up some catchy hits and becoming a reality star, the TV presenter and actor is now in his 30th year in showbiz *and* is celebrating his 50th birthday in February. The 49-year-old, who's married to Emily and is proud dad to Junior, 17, and Princess, 15, from his marriage to Katie Price, and Amelia, who turns nine this week, and Theo, six, with Emily, has big plans to make his year count. Here, Pete opens up about big birthdays, 2023 plans and why he's now looking forward to being a grandad...

Hi Pete, Happy New Year! It's an exciting one for you...

Well, I'll be 50 in February, but it's also 30 years in the entertainment industry. I'm going to focus on the 30, because it sounds better!

How do you feel about turning the big 5-0?

When I turned 40, I didn't like that number at all. I remember ringing my sister and saying, 'Why do I feel so weird about turning 40?' But she said that after a few months, I'd embrace it. And actually my 40s were my best years. So, of course, I'm dreading the number, but I know that a few months in, I'm going to think, 'This rocks!'

What do you have planned to celebrate it?

Next Spring/Summer, I finally release my first-ever feature film. Within that, I've written a song for the soundtrack, so it also introduces me back into the music. And because it's 30 years, I'm also going to do an album. I haven't done one for eight/nine years.

Do you ever have to just pinch yourself?

All the time. When I was younger and living in Australia, I said to my dad, 'I'm going to go back to England, I'm going to make it, sell out Wembley Arena, and then when I'm in my 40s, I'm going to move into film.' I can't believe that all those things came true. I'm very grateful.

Anything else you'd like to tick off your bucket-list in your new decade?

Film's something I've always dreamed of. Maybe the first one will be a success, or maybe it'll take five more, but I'd love a successful film. And one more hit record!

THE GRILL PUB CO.
caudwell children

Peter with Princess, Junior and Emily

BEYOND MEAT
#FirstStepBeyond

The star considers himself a 'flexitarian'

Would you have liked to do the *I'm a Celeb... All Stars* version that airs soon?

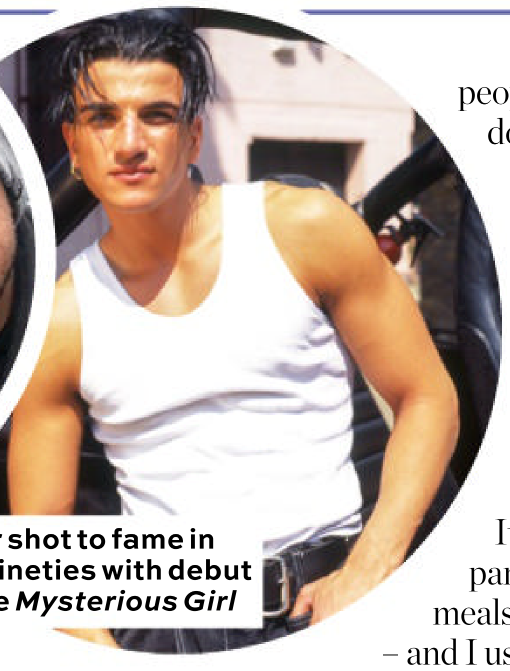
They asked me but I said it wasn't for me. Just because I've been in there twice. I went in in 2004, and then for the day when Mark Wright and Fatima Whitbread were there.

Did you make any New Year's resolutions?

I've teamed up with a

Instagram/peterandre

Chilling with Emily



Peter shot to fame in the Nineties with debut single *Mysterious Girl*

nutritionist to make the app #itsfine – and the whole point is that there's not one food out of bounds. It's about how much of it you eat. Instead of calorie counting, we set weekly goals so that if you have a blowout day, you don't stress about it. Because I live that lifestyle, I don't have to go crazy in January.

But you do like to keep fit…

Part of the balance for me is exercise and keeping active. I train in the gym, I do sprints and all sorts, but it can even be taking your dog for a walk. Even though I don't walk around with full-on abs, they're there – they're just hibernating right now [laughs].

Do you ever work out with Emily, or even the kids?

Emily's one of those lucky people – she's got abs and doesn't have to train. It does my head in, but everyone's different!

You're also fronting a Veganuary cooking competition. Are you vegan?

It's funny, because my parents made vegetarian meals three times a week – and I used to call them the boring days! So, as I got older, I ate the foods I liked, which was meat every day. Then I got to my 40s and decided I wanted a mix of the two. I'm very much a 'flexitarian'. And Beyond Meat has made that so easy. I'm not saying for people to go totally vegan – that would be hypocritical – but to introduce it two or three times a week. Not only are you helping the planet, but it does your body a lot of good.

Who does the cooking in your house?

I like to think I'm a good cook, but what I am not is a chef. Emily and I are a winning combo, as I love cooking and Emily's a great cook.

You recently spoke about how you and Emily sometimes think about having more kids. Do you think you will?

Theo's at the golden age. He's six and so sweet, kind and just like a bundle of fluff. So then you think, 'Oh no, when this time goes, that's it.' But one of the things I said to Emily is that if we had another, then in six years, we'd feel exactly the same. Where's the end? So, what we can do is enjoy them growing up and then when the time is right, maybe they'll have children – and we get to enjoy them in a different way.

● **Pete is teaming with Beyond Meat to inspire the nation to take the first step towards a plant-based diet this Veganuary… and beyond. For your chance to win a luxury two-night weekend stay and cook with Peter, visit beyondmeat.com.**

Pete's new Jungle Queen

While Pete famously met his ex-wife Katie Price in the Aussie jungle, he's got a brand-new Queen to team up with – last year's champ, Lioness Jill Scott. Pete recently invited Jill, 35, to join him on stage, after she sang one of his songs on the show. 'We've spoken and she said she'll do it,' Pete tells us. 'She's on it!' But it turns out Pete and Jill's budding friendship started way before *I'm a Celeb*: 'It's a really bizarre thing. I'd been speaking to Jill for about a year on Instagram and I didn't know it was the same person. I got a direct message from someone called Jill inviting me to her coffee shop. I knew she played football, but it didn't click until she came out of the jungle, and I heard her talking about her coffee shop!'

WORDS: *RIANNE ISON* PICTURES: *GETTY, INSTAGRAM, SHUTTERSTOCK*

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TO SIGN UP TODAY!

PICTURES: *NICKY JOHNSTON*

Weighing IN!

Find out what happened when animals at Whipsnade and London Zoo took to the scales...

WORDS: *HELEN PIKE*
PICTURES: *ZSL LONDON ZOO, ZSL WHIPSNADE ZOO*

COLOURFUL CHAMELEON

This little creature weighed in at a modest 240g, but the big question is, did he camouflage with the scales?

A TUSK TASK

Ming Jung, a 14-year-old endangered Asian elephant, was coaxed across his industrial-sized scales by being tempted with his favourite snacks. He weighed in at approximately four tonnes!

THE RULER OF THE LAND

We don't think Sumatran tigress Gaysha can get away with boasting she's 7ft – though we're too scared to tell her!

STEPPING ON

Dobby was first in the queue of Rockhopper penguins. She only hatched last May and had to be hand-fed by keepers after her parents were unable to look after her. Luckily the chick recorded a healthy 1.84kg.

ZSL WHIPSNADE ZOO
ANNUAL WEIGH IN 2022

EARNING YOUR STRIPES

Lemur Daphne just needed a bit of juicy, sweet pepper to be lured onto their scales, coming in at 2.8kg.

BIRDS OF A FEATHER

Weighing in is a hoot for Owlberta, who came in at a healthy 464g!

The world is Emma's oyster

'I'm a real-lif

Looking for new things to try in 2023? **Emma Harper** has found a swimmingly good career...

Diving down into the sea, I finally felt at peace. The sounds from the surface became muted and my body felt weightless as I used my tail fin to push me down to the seabed.

Wearing my silicone tail and a sparkly bikini – designed with two shells and a starfish in the centre – I somersaulted back to the surface, flicking my long blonde hair.

'Wow, it's a real-life mermaid!' a child said, open-mouthed.

I swam in Cornish waters all year round, while free-diving to depths of 65ft and holding my breath for up to four minutes at a time. Mischief the Mermaid is my alter-ego and she reminds me that anything is possible. The world is my very own oyster...

Growing up, I'd been obsessed with the water, begging my mum to take me to the beach every weekend.

I didn't care if it was raining – being submerged in water, and hearing the waves crashing on the shore, was the only thing that made me feel at ease.

When I was three, Mum took us to the local beach in Mablethorpe, Lincolnshire, and put me on an inflatable turtle. She'd held the rope as I bobbed on top of the water, letting the waves carry me towards the shore. I was mesmerised by the colours of the sea and the life it gave to the different creatures below.

Mum signed me up for swimming lessons, and I took to them like a duck to water. By the time I was five, I was awarded my Swimming Challenge gold certificate. I was elated! In the Summer I'd spend all my time at the lido or on the beach.

She even does private 'wash-ups'

My favourite film quickly became the 1984 movie *Splash* and when I'd go to the beach, I'd frolic around in the sea, pretending I was a mermaid.

By the time I reached my teens, I became a pool lifeguard, after school and on weekends.

I didn't have many friends at school, and later found out I was neurodiverse and would distract myself by swimming, with only the water able to hear my thoughts. It became my very own therapy.

By 1998, I moved to Edinburgh to start my degree in drama and theatre arts. I was later diagnosed with dyslexia and ADHD, which helped me realise why I'd always felt different to everyone else.

On my days off, I'd find lochs nearby that allowed me to free-dive and swim to my heart's content – the cold water giving me a rush.

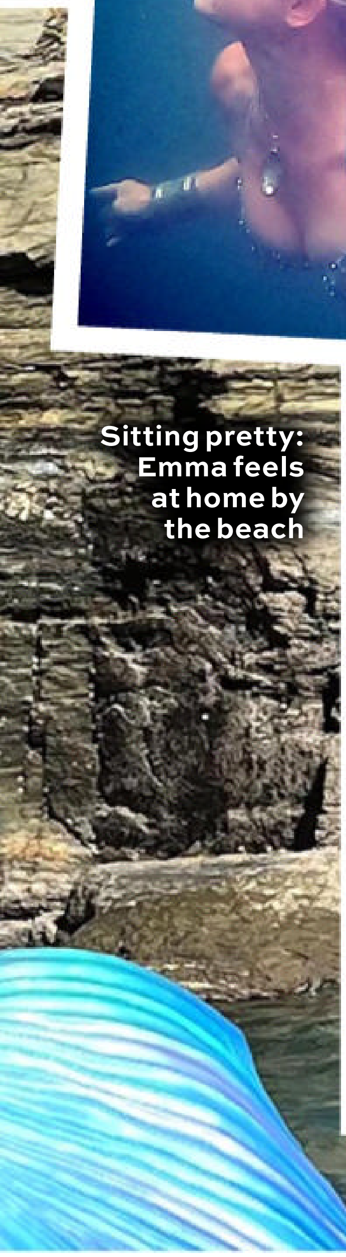
After graduating, I set up my own business specialising in marketing, PR and event management.

And within a year, I met bar manager Craig. I hired him several times for different events because he was good with crowds and could make a killer cocktail!

Despite being 24, one night we were talking about our failed relationships. 'I'd marry you,' I blurted out.

e mermaid!’

Feeling free in the sea



Sitting pretty: Emma feels at home by the beach

Teaching kids about sea safety

A few days later, Craig invited me out for dinner, and we’ve been inseparable ever since! As our romance got serious, we bought a house near my parents in Ingham, Lincolnshire, and in 2006, I had our son Finn. And three years later, Leo.

I’d had difficult pregnancies, suffered badly with post-natal depression and my weight went from a size 8 to a size 16 in just a couple of months. I was constantly anaemic. But it was always worth it seeing our gorgeous boys’ faces.

By 2008, Craig and I tied the knot, and I loved having a family of my own, but I dreamt of living near the coast.

There weren’t any nearby reservoirs, and the only option for swimming was a leisure centre, but it didn’t feel the same.

> **‘If there’s one thing I’ve learned’**
>
> **Believing in yourself is how you find the magic. It’s our job to protect ourselves and the sea as best we can.**

‘I’m not happy here,’ I told Craig, ‘It’s too flat and I want to be able to swim.’

We agreed to move to Barnsley, South Yorkshire, and I became pregnant with our third son, Arthur, in 2011.

Shortly after falling pregnant, tests revealed I had ulcerative colitis – a long-term condition where the colon and rectum become inflamed.

Luckily, doctors put me on medication and agreed for me to have a C-section. Having three boys was a real blessing and I loved being a mum.

However, in 2015, I was devastated when I lost my dad to bowel cancer. Doctors said he also had colitis and I too was high risk and needed to make sure I was living a healthy lifestyle.

I decided that my dream of living by the sea was now or never. ‘I’ll support you no matter what,’ Craig said. And within three years, we moved to Truro, Cornwall.

The boys enrolled in a new school, and I went swimming every day. I practiced my dolphin stroke to help my fitness, passed a free-diving course, and created my mermaid alter-ego, Mischief.

I set up Mischief to work alongside mental health charities – like Mind Cornwall – and would do appearances where I would tell children stories and raise money.

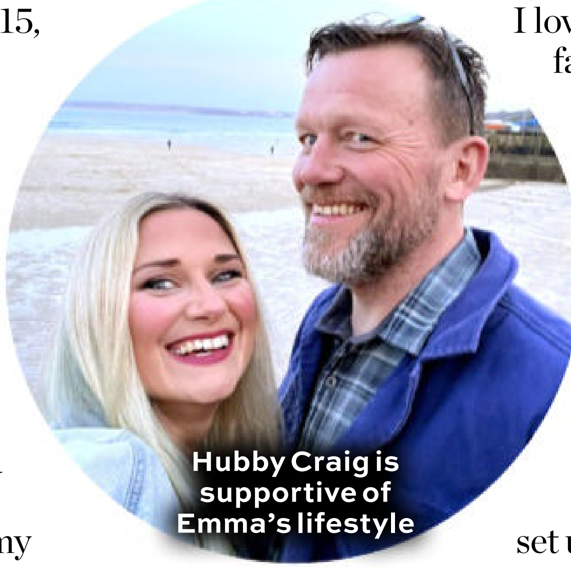
‘Have you ever thought about being a professional mermaid instructor?’ my coach quizzed. ‘You’re exceptionally good!’

Mermaiding had taken off in the US at a professional-level and I’d always been intrigued. So, I went home and researched it – I was in awe. ‘It’s what I’ve always dreamed of doing!’ I beamed to Craig.

I knew it was my destiny as I’d always felt connected to the sea. I did water-based aquatic training and completed the SSI Ocean Mermaid courses before getting insurance to make sure I was covered. I became the first mermaid in Cornwall, and during lockdown, mermaid numbers increased – with many of us teaching children about ocean conservation when restrictions had lifted.

I purchased a new eco-friendly tail made from recycled materials, which I paired with a sustainable bikini. I wore waterproof make-up and only used eco-glitter on dry land.

I couldn’t believe it when I started getting bookings for hotel appearances and private ‘wash-ups’, where I read to children about sea safety and conservation.



Hubby Craig is supportive of Emma’s lifestyle

I loved seeing their faces when they watched me in the sea, or when I read with them. They were the future, so it was important they knew how to protect aquatic life.

Recently, I set up the Cornish Merpod – consisting of six mermaids and a merman. We all free-dive and go in the sea rip currents. It requires so much physical work, as you move your entire body as one, and the dangers are no joke when the tide is strong. But I wouldn’t change my job for the world.

I believe we live among mermaids, and the folklore is true – especially as more than 80 per cent of the ocean hasn’t even been explored yet. Who knows what lurks in the depths below!

Now at 42, I’m the healthiest I’ve ever been, and my doctor always tells me to carry on mermaiding, as it’s helping my body!

I no longer need medication for my colitis, and I love being a real-life Ariel – minus the red locks! No one can tell me otherwise!

WORDS: *KAYA TERRY* PICTURES: *KENNEDY NEWS*

Follow Emma on Instagram @mischiefthemermaid

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£14

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Food in

Kit out your kitchen with products or make healthy

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Casserole dish, Habitat

tentions

Weekly Meal Planner

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Dinner

Shopping List

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Saturday

Sunday

£7.99

Food planner, Amazon

that will help you batch cook
food swaps

BRING BACK

It comes naturally to children, but many of us go on to lose our ability to have fun. Here's how to get it back – and why playing can benefit your wellbeing...

When was the last time you played? Childlike fun has numerous benefits for adults. It can release endorphins, ease stress, build and maintain relationships and even boost brain function, encouraging development of the cerebral cortex and aiding brain cell growth, learning, and memory. And yet, a 2019 survey revealed that more than half of adults agree that the older you get, the more difficult it becomes to find amusement in everyday life. According to the research, just four in 10 people actively seek out enjoyable experiences in their day-to-day lives.

Respondents added that it got harder to enjoy everyday life as they got older. The reasons for this were a combination of increased responsibility, financial constraints, lack of energy and quite simply, because they didn't know how to have fun. But the good news is that six per cent of people would love to restore the childlike spark they once had.

'We facilitate play for children, but for ourselves, it's easy to overlook,' says Charlotte Fox Weber, psychotherapist and author of *What We Want*. 'When researching what we want from life for my book, I was struck by the power of play when people voiced their longings. The desire to play is in all of us, and we're naturally playful creatures. But we push it away, and disguise it as wanting something else, mostly out of embarrassment and because we're burdened by responsibilities.'

Charlotte believes that what's holding us back from play is our attitude. 'We value play for children, but we tend to second guess and disavow the value for ourselves,' she explains. However, play is valuable for people of all stages and ages, whatever the circumstances. 'Playing sharpens our minds, reduces stress, helps us deal with conflict, and makes life more enjoyable,' says Charlotte. 'If you're worried about embarrassing yourself, consider that it's a worthwhile risk. Just as children play and learn one step and stumble at a time, we too can start with small steps to bring back that spark of fun. There will always be endless chores, but by learning to play at intervals, taking breaks for bite-sized activities and moments of giddy fun, we can celebrate being alive.'

Here, Charlotte offers her top tips for unleashing your inner child...

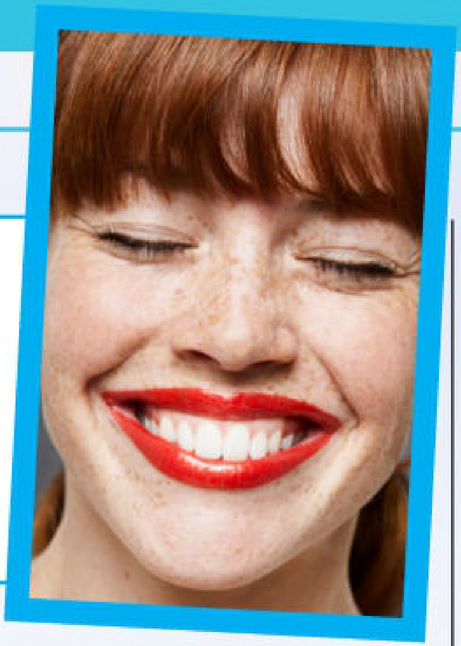
REMEMBER THE FUN

Write down a list of activities you remember loving playing from your childhood. Toasting marshmallows, sparklers, water balloons, a pillow fight – pick one of these from your list and do it with someone if you can. If it's not as fun as you remember, no harm done, but you might just enjoy borrowing from your memory bank. Keep adding to the list as memories come to you.

DELIBERATELY GET LOST

It's a joy to wander and not know where you're going, when it's safe. One of the privileges of childhood is dawdling aimlessly (with a responsible adult nearby). But the pressures of adulthood can make us hyper responsible. We get stuck in repetitious routines. Allowing ourselves to be spontaneous will spark our playful potential.

Playtime!



GO BOLD WITH COLOUR

Choose a shade of lipstick you've never dared to wear before, a new bright nail varnish or even buy yourself some bold, jazzy towels – a new colour is a zesty reminder of the expansive range of fresh possibilities in life.

PLAY A SONG YOU LOVE ON FULL VOLUME

Teenagers are good examples for how to listen to tunes wholeheartedly. Whatever music you choose, let it resonate with your innermost self. It's amazing how music can remind us of lost parts of ourselves.

MAKE SOMETHING WITHOUT FOLLOWING A RECIPE

Throw in ingredients and go off the beaten track. Experimenting is adventurous and liberating. Unlike pressures for productivity and responsibility, playing is about the experience, not the end result.

PLAY DRESS UP

Try on something outrageous and reinvigorate the wonders of fantasy. A large hat that you don't need. A feather boa. A fluffy beard. You can play many roles in life, but adults need reminders that we don't need to get stuck in one part. Recast yourself.

GIVE A PET NAME TO SOMETHING

A plant, a car, an appliance. Naming objects, as children often do, is idiosyncratic and meaningful in marking our personalities. It helps us appreciate the quirks of everyday life in our own personal way.

GET DIRTY

We become so careful and tidy as adults, but a bit of mess brings us back to our playful childlike roots. Get muddy on a walk, go camping and sleep on the ground, swim somewhere wild, experience nature in its dirty glory –it's the most innocently playful kind of grit.

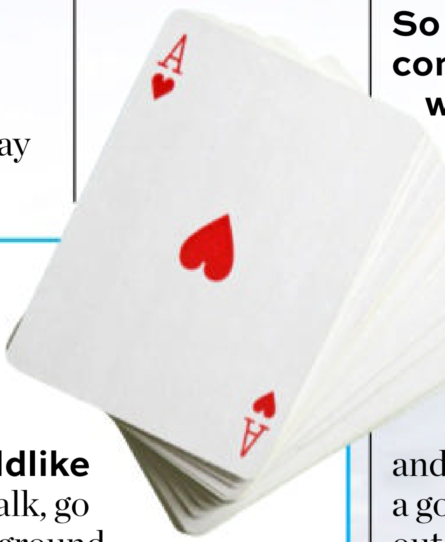
> **THE DESIRE TO PLAY IS IN ALL OF US**

DO SOMETHING ARTY – FOR FUN

Adults put too much pressure on themselves to be skilled, but you don't need to be excellent at something to enjoy doing it. Think of how kids are able to draw and paint without being too careful, and that's part of the imaginative process. Let loose in your self-expression.

EXPERIMENT WITH WORDS

Children love making rhymes and it's something we forget to do as adults, because wordplay doesn't feel essential or purposeful. But fun can be had by viewing familiar words in new ways. Part of why children are good at wordplay is because there's a touch of mischief in the serious art of learning.



PLAY CARDS

So much of adulthood consists of rules and waiting, without enough playing. A card game benefits from rules but it's often the exciting mischief within those rules that generates the most fun. Get others to join you in a card game and remind yourself of how fun it is to bluff and watch people's faces. Cheat is a good classic, and a safe way to act out without actually acting out!

● ***What We Want* by Charlotte Fox Weber (Wildfire, £20) is out now.**

WORDS: *ELLA DOVE AND CHARLOTTE FOX WEBER* PICTURES: *GETTY*

Dear Vaness

Our celebrity agony aunt, Vanessa Feltz, tackles your problems with her usual wit, wisdom and humour

DEALING WITH THE FALLOUT

Christmas was a total disaster and ended with a blazing row between one side of my family and the other. It all got ugly, and things were said on both sides that can't be taken back. The worst part is, we haven't spoken since, and everyone is being stubborn as to who will make the first move. I want to sort things out but don't know where to start. Any advice would be much appreciated.

Shanelle, Coventry

Why don't you opt to be the bigger person and set the ball of reconciliation rolling? You definitely don't want to be estranged from your nearest and dearest forever so take control and start playing the pipes of peace. Falling out over the festive season is a national cliché. Practically every family in the country goes through it. The trick is to forgive, forget and have a happy peaceful 2023, ASAP. You wave the olive branch and be the good fairy. You'll feel fab about yourself.

MY BIG FAT WEIGHT-LOSS YEAR

Not to sound like a cliché, but I'm really hoping to lose weight this year. I've got some big events coming up – including one daughter's graduation and my son's wedding – and I want to look and feel my best. I'm thinking of joining a weight-loss programme and gym, but worried I'll lose motivation. What advice do you have – I know you've been there and got the T-shirt, Vanessa!

Harriet, Wrexham

I know your pain! I had to resort first to a gastric band and then to a gastric bypass to keep my weight off. I was quite good at dieting to a goal though. I'd exercise like a fiend and eat like a rabbit and the pounds would drop off. It was when the big occasion was over that the weight would go straight back on and then some. If I were you I'd join a local slimming club just for extra support and once you've dropped the weight carry on attending for added motivation. Good luck!

PICTURES: *GETTY, NICKY JOHNSTON*

● **Email your questions to *AskVanessa@hearst.co.uk***

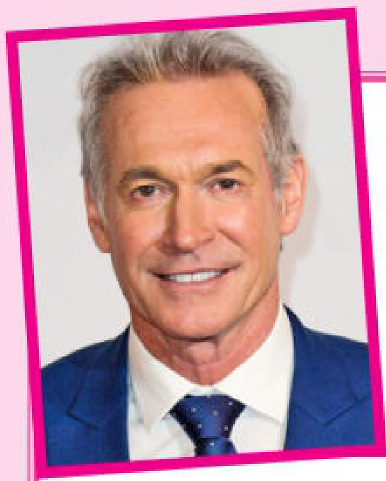
a

I WANT MY MUM TO GIVE ME AWAY

I have a turbulent relationship with my dad ever since he and my mum split up when I was in my early 20s. We've since reconciled and started to build our relationship back, slowly but surely. However, I'm getting married this year and want my mum to give me away but don't know how to broach the subject with my dad. Any ideas, Vanessa?

Jean, Inverness

Why don't you build on the progress you are making at rebuilding your relationship with your dad and ask him to share the walking you down the aisle moment with your mum? Either they can escort you together walking on either side of you, which often happens at Jewish weddings. Or your dad can take your arm into the church and deliver you to your mum, who could take you up to the groom. Think about including in any way you can rather than excluding. Everyone will feel part of your wonderful day and you will be on cloud nine.



What's up Doc?

Hilary Jones MBE is a GP, medical writer and *Good Morning Britain*'s resident medic

TIME TO KICK THE HABIT!

I have decided 2023 is going to be the year that I stop smoking for good – or at least that's what I'm telling myself. As much as I'm tempted to go cold turkey, I know it's not for me. Any thoughts on the best route?

Corrina, Glasgow

DR HILARY SAYS:
Keep telling yourself 'this is the year!'. Tobacco smoke contains over 5,000 chemicals, many of them poisonous and 70 of which can promote cancer. Smokers on average live 10 years less than non-smokers and smoking is the biggest avoidable cause of disease and premature death in the UK accounting for about 80,000 deaths per year. Remind yourself of these facts and if cold turkey is not for you think about nicotine replacement therapy, which is free to everyone from your community pharmacy and gives you access to additional support through your prescriber. Smokers are addicted to nicotine, but it's the tar that harms you. Nicotine replacement patches or chewing gum will help and there are medication such as Champix and Zyban. Set a quit date, stick to it, get friends and family to help and avoid the situations and people that encourage you to smoke.

CRIPPLING HEALTH ANXIETY

I've suffered from severe health anxiety for the past couple of years. I'm not sure what triggered it, but now any time I get so much as a cold, I google the symptoms and it's all I can think about. I also worry and start to make myself ill even when there's nothing wrong. It's a never-ending cycle I can't get out of – can you help?

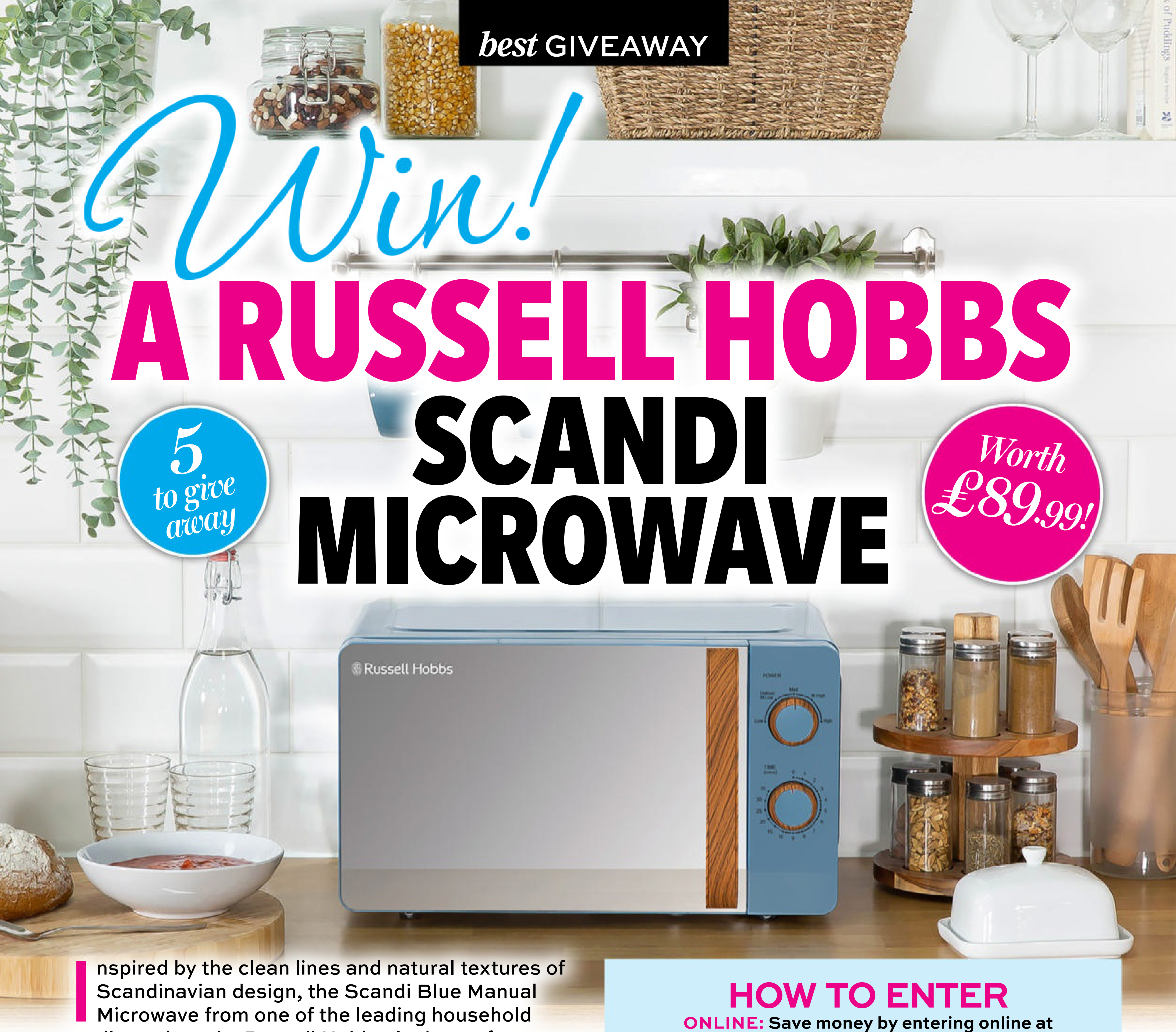
Dawn, Reading

DR HILARY SAYS:
The onset of your health anxiety coincided with the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic, which focused many people's minds on illness generally and the rather random nature of it. Certain life events such as ill health or death in a relative or friend can also trigger these negative thoughts too. Worrying about every little symptom can also go hand-in-hand with conditions such as depression, anxiety and even the menopause. You might like to talk to your GP about these possibilities and get a general check-up just for reassurance. Then positive thinking, such as reminding yourself that you are generally well and that nothing has changed in the past two years, and not being tempted to use unreliable sources such as the internet is vital.

Dr Hilary

See drhilaryjones.com

● **Got a problem you'd like Dr Hilary to answer? Email him at *AskDrHilary@hearst.co.uk***



Win!

A RUSSELL HOBBS SCANDI MICROWAVE

5 to give away

Worth £89.99!

Inspired by the clean lines and natural textures of Scandinavian design, the Scandi Blue Manual Microwave from one of the leading household appliance brands, Russell Hobbs, is the perfect everyday microwave, ideal for cooking a variety of meals in minutes. The wood effect accents will give your kitchen a chic and sophisticated look. This microwave boasts five power levels to tailor the cooking to suit your recipe, and for added functionality, there's also a defrost setting, saving you time so that you can heat meals straight from the freezer. *best* have five microwaves to give away. To enter, see right.

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ONLINE: Save money by entering online at hearstmagazines.co.uk/best123 by 20 January 2023.

PHONE: Call 0901 027 2739 by midnight on 20 January 2023.

Calls cost 30p per minute, plus your telephone company's network access charge, and will last no longer than two minutes. Charges for mobiles may be higher. Phone line closes at midnight on 20 January 2023. If you call after this time, you will not be entered but you may be charged. Service provided by Spoke: 0333 202 3390.

T&Cs: Winners will be selected at random from entries received by phone/online. We will use the information you provide to process your entry. For our privacy notice, please see hearst.co.uk/privacy-notice. For full terms and conditions, see below.

***TERMS & CONDITIONS:** Open to UK residents aged 18 and over. To enter visit hearstmagazines.co.uk/best123 or call 0901 027 2739 by midnight on 20 January 2023. Entries in the incorrect format will not be considered. This competition opens on 3 January 2023 and closes on 20 January 2023. Entries received after the closing date will not be considered. The prize is a Russell Hobbs Scandi Blue Manual Microwave worth £89.99. Please note the colour of the microwave may differ according to availability. Five winners will be randomly selected from the entries received. Entrants will be deemed to have accepted these Terms and to have agreed to be bound by them. This competition is not open to any employees of Hearst Magazines, the promoter or their immediate families, the promoter's advertising agency and sales promotion consultancy, or anyone else connected with the creation and administration of the competition. Only one competition entry, fulfilling the eligibility requirements above, will be accepted per person. Once selected, only the winners will be contacted personally using the contact details provided upon entry. Winners will be notified once selected. Winners will have five (5) working days to respond in full or another winner will be selected. Hearst Magazines' decision is final in every situation, including any not covered above and no correspondence will be entered into in respect of the validity of any such decision. Hearst Magazines shall be permitted to exclude or disqualify any entrant at any time at its sole discretion. Hearst Magazines reserves the right to exclude late, incomplete or multiple registrations, or registrations made by third parties or agents. Hearst Magazines does not accept any responsibility for late or lost entries. Proof of sending is not proof of receipt. The name of the winners will be available by sending a stamped addressed envelope to House of Hearst, 30 Panton Street, London SW1Y 4AJ, indicating the name of the competition. Entry to the competition and acceptance of the prize constitutes permission to use any entrant's name, image and any competition entry photograph, for promotional and/or editorial purposes in any format in print and non-print media without additional consultation. No purchase is necessary. Once entered, entries cannot be returned / withdrawn. Spammers will be disqualified. Prizes must be taken as stated and cannot be deferred although Hearst Magazines reserve the right to change the prize in the event of unforeseen circumstances and/or in line with current government guidance on Covid-19. There will be no cash alternative. We will use the information you supply to process your competition entry. For our privacy notice visit hearst.co.uk/privacy-notice. Hearst Magazines reserves the right to (i) cancel and/or withdraw this competition and/or (ii) amend these Terms, at any time without notice. Where Hearst Magazines runs a competition with a promoter such that the promoter is responsible for the selection and/or the provision of prizes then Hearst Magazines shall not be responsible for or have any liability for the provision of such prizes. To the fullest extent permitted by applicable law, in no event will Hearst Magazines be liable, whether in contract, tort (including negligence), breach of statutory duty, or otherwise, for any loss, damage or injury arising under or in connection with this competition. These Terms are governed by English law, and entrants agree to submit to the exclusive jurisdiction of the English Courts in relation to all matters arising under or in connection with these Terms.

MONEY-SAVING hacks!

Stretch your budget and boost your finances with a little help from the Money Saving Mum!

WHAT'S INSIDE

How to turn pennies into pounds

Simple solutions to put cash in your pocket

Save at the supermarket

PICTURES: GETTY

PICTURES: SARAH BRICK PHOTOGRAPHY, GETTY

Worrying about bills or prices rising at alarming rates? Fear not! Gemma Bird, the Money-Saving Mum, is here to help...

TURN PENNIES INTO *pounds*

‘Happy New Year, everyone,’ I smiled into my camera. ‘If you’re looking to save money, why not start the penny challenge today? Save one pence today, two pence tomorrow and carry on adding a penny every day. By the end of the year, you’ll have £667.95. And if you’re looking to spread the cost of next year’s Christmas, start putting away £2 a day – or whatever you can. It’ll really take the pressure off.’

As I posted the useful video to my Instagram page, MoneyMumOfficial, I couldn’t help but feel proud. I was using the financial tips and tricks I’d picked up over the years to help other people manage their money at a time when, quite literally, every penny counts.

I’d always been good with money, ever since I was a child. My dad was a bus driver and Mum was a cleaner. We never had much, so I learnt the lessons of budgeting and saving early on. I delivered newspapers when I was just 13 years old and picked mushrooms for an hour before school at 14.

I’ll always remember Dad giving me a monthly allowance for my bus fare when I was at college. ‘That’s it mind, once it’s gone, it’s gone,’ he warned me. Of course, that first month, I spent it within days but when I asked him for more, he shook his head. ‘Absolutely not,’ he replied firmly. ‘You won’t be able to ask your boss for your wage early. You need to learn how to make your money last.’

‘If there’s one thing I’ve learned’

It’s never too early – or too late – to become financially savvy.

That message had never left me – or how important it was to have money in the bank. So when I got my first job at a medical centre, I tucked away £800 out of my £1,000 monthly wage. By the time I was 23, me and my then-partner could afford a £25,000 deposit on a house.

Three years later, by renting out my spare room to a lodger and sticking to a strict budget, I’d saved another £10,000 and bought two buy-to-let properties with my dad.

By the time I broke up with my partner, and later met Adam, now 48, online in 2011, I had enough to pay off his £225,000 mortgage on his house in Billericay, in Essex.

The relief of being mortgage-free was incredible, especially when we went on to have our two children, Brody, now 10, and Bronte, three. I wanted to be able to take them on holiday, see the world, make memories – and now we could afford to do that.

By January 2020, I wanted to pass on all of the hints and hacks I'd picked up along the way. I was sick of social media pushing the message that life was perfect and easy. I wanted to show people you didn't need to earn loads of money in order to save – or, like me, pay off your mortgage in your 30s.

So I set up my Instagram page, posting not just practical tips, but also freebies, offers and deals I came across. I couldn't believe the response I got, especially when, two months later, the pandemic struck and people were stuck at home, with little to do but check their social media.

Right from the start, my inbox was flooded with people who were desperate. Those who were struggling with debt, parents who couldn't afford to feed their children, even cancer patients who couldn't afford the electricity to turn on their life-saving equipment. The worry and fear in their messages made me feel sick.

'Please turn on your equipment now,' I'd reply in a voicenote, so they could hear a friendly voice. 'Your health is the most important thing. If you can't pay your bill, we'll deal with that later, but in the meantime, speak to the Citizens Advice Bureau and see what support you're entitled to.'

People who say that money can't buy happiness, clearly have never had any financial worries. Because not being able to put your heating on or afford the bare essentials – and I've been there – is miserable.

Over the past few months, the people who have been getting in touch are those who have good jobs with decent wages – and they're still struggling. Because it's not just energy bills that have gone up. The rising cost of food, petrol prices, mortgages and rent mean that people are paying out hundreds more pounds every month.

At 41, over the past three years, I've shared literally hundreds of tips. One of my favourites is checking your bank account every night and saving the last figure in there. So if you have £23, you'd move £3 into your savings. If you can't afford that, then save the spare pence – or whatever you can afford.

> “I WANTED TO PASS ON ALL OF THE HINTS AND HACKS I'D PICKED UP”

Of course, I know at the moment not everyone can afford to save and that they need every penny to get by. So I give tips to help everyone keep costs down, too. Like, at the supermarket, use a scanner as you fill your trolley to keep an eye on your total. Although it may only seem like coppers, you'll soon notice how much you can save by buying own-brand food on a weekly shop. While you're there, pick up one of their free magazines, so you can use their recipes and can often pick up deals and coupons in there.

I encourage no-spend days, for people to buy frozen food and to try the Too Good To Go app. Buy yellow-sticker bread and fruit to freeze, and use half a packet of mince for spaghetti Bolognese and shepherd's pies, then bulk them up with extra vegetables.

It's all about changing your mindset and valuing every single pound. Think of it like going to the gym – once you realise just how long it takes to burn off a chocolate bar, you don't want to eat it. Similarly, if you think about your hourly wage, after tax, then work out how long it would take you to earn that jumper or dress, or whatever it is you're thinking of buying, it just might make you think differently.

It doesn't really matter how much you're saving – as long as you're saving something. Because it really does all add up.

Turn over for more

● **Follow Gemma @moneymumofficial**

WORDS: SARAH WHITELEY PICTURES: FP FOCUS POINT PHOTOGRAPHY, GETTY

SAVE YOURSELF HAPPY WITH *money mum*

Take control of your finances with Gemma Bird's savvy solutions...

1 TRACK YOUR SPENDING

So many people roll their eyes at this because they think it sounds boring. But there is nothing boring about going on an amazing holiday or a new car. Am I right?

A spending tracker is easy to set up. When it's up and running, you'll find you want to use it. It's kind of like being in a saving competition with yourself, and this is the scoreboard. If you've got a computer you can use a programme like Excel or Google Sheets, which does the calculations for you. If you prefer pen and paper, you can write it down instead. I know some people who use a whiteboard in the kitchen for this. The important thing is keeping a record!

> “PUT MONEY SAVED FROM NO SPEND DAY INTO SAVINGS”

2 TRY MY NO SPEND DAY

The technique is pretty simple – you just don't spend any money for a day! If you're hanging out with friends, go round to each other's house rather than going out. If you're doing something with the kids, it has to be free, like the park. Take your own coffees instead of going to the café. It's amazing to see how resourceful you can be. You can take No Spend Day to the next level, add up all the money you have saved and put it into your savings account.

3

NO MORE COFFEE TO GO!

This is a great way to start noticing more cash straightaway. The average medium latte costs around £3, so if you have one every morning, you are spending £15 a week! That's before you've thrown in a snack! Look at what you could save in a year simply by ditching them:

£3 x 5 = £15

£15 a week = £60 a month

over 12 months = £720

Turn over for more

PICTURES: GETTY

4 BILLS!

As tempting as it is to let the bills and renewal letters pile up, I always respond as soon as it arrives. Why? Two reasons. Firstly, they will likely be offering you a really good deal in that letter, but the longer you leave, the higher prices will get. The same goes for electricity and car insurance and almost every other major household bill. Secondly, it is so stressful having all these bills and letters staring at you from the sideboard! As someone who suffers from anxiety, I want to get these off my to-do list ASAP. It might be a short-term win to block it out, but the long-term effect of letting things like that back up is worse.

> “TAKE METER READINGS TO AVOID PAYING TOO MUCH”

6 TAKE METER READINGS!

It's too easy to just go with whatever the electric or gas estimates are and forget about it. Unless you give them the proper information, you are going to be paying either too much, in which case the energy suppliers will have more of your money than they should, or too little, in which case you're going to be hit with a big bill at some point when they work it all out.

5 DON'T ASK; DON'T GET!

Phoning your supplier to see if they can beat their prices is such a quick and simple way to save money. More often than not, they are relying on you being too busy! Tell them you've found a better price elsewhere and see what they say. You'll be amazed at what they will do to make sure they don't lose your business.

8

SELL, SELL, SELL!

There are so many ways to generate income from your existing possessions. Here's how to start...

CAR BOOT SALE

Sell all those small, low-value things you've got sitting in boxes – toys and books, old pairs of shoes, the vase your aunty gave you for Christmas!

FACEBOOK MARKETPLACE

While a relatively young selling platform, I absolutely love it for shifting larger items at a local level. Even better, people come and collect their items, so you don't have to worry about postage.

Take clear photographs and describe any item's faults, otherwise it'll be coming back home again before you know it.

DEPOP AND VINTED TO GUMTREE AND SHPOCK, all have strengths and weaknesses. For example, Depop is popular with young people selling streetwear and vintage fashion. Not the best place to get rid of your old travel cot, but if you've got some cool 1980s roller skates to flog, you're in! Research the different platforms and consider where the best place to sell your gear is.

> “FACEBOOK IS GREAT FOR SHIFTING LARGE ITEMS LOCALLY”

RECYCLE YOUR MOBILE PHONE

That old handset sitting in the back of your drawer could be worth a couple of hundred pounds or more. There are a number of mobile phone recycling websites, you can put in your model and see what it might be worth. Pop it in the post and get paid! Just remember to set it back to factory settings before you send it.

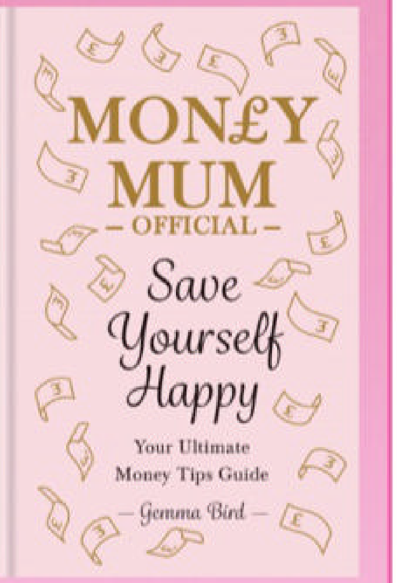
7

SHOP SMART AT THE SUPERMARKET!

Just by thinking a bit, you can shave pounds off your weekly total. Try this and see how much you can save:

- Plan meals and write a shopping list for what you need. Don't buy anything that isn't on the list!
- Remember meat and fish are expensive, so plan for veggie meals too.
- Go at the end of the day, when they are marking down.
- Look at the price per 100g, not the item price. You'll notice how much more expensive some things are!
- Buy your fruit and veg loose and buy in season.

Taken from *Money Mum Official: Save Yourself Happy* by Gemma Bird, published by Hamlyn, £12.99 Hardback *The Money Journal by* Gemma Bird is publishing on 2 February at £12.99



PICTURES: GETTY

Share your story with *best*

Do you have a story you'd like to share with our amazing army of *best* readers?

We're looking for real-life stories from women just like you and your friends – and will pay up to £250 for all those that make it into these pages. Stories can be funny, sad, emotional, inspirational – just like some of the examples on this page. The only rule: they must be true.

Have you been on a diet that changed your life? Have you battled against tough times and come out fighting? Have you found love or happiness against the odds?

If you – or a friend – have a story to share, whatever the subject, do drop us a line, with your contact details, a photo and a brief outline of your story – ideally no more than 100 words.

Email us at louise.bulgin@hearst.co.uk

'Criminals stole my identity'

Identity fraud is on the rise. Vicky Powell, a journalist from London, tells how she was targeted by criminals who intercepted her mail, stole her driving licence and applied for credit cards in her name...

'He told me that HSBC had not sent a courier to my home. I went cold'

If you are the victim of identity fraud:

'I lost 7st and got a revenge body!'

Size 24

Size 10

'I hated how I looked and hid away in baggy clothes'

'Why I took the leap!'

'For a moment I was worried he might faint'

INSTA-glamour!

@Baddiewinkle

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Contact us via Facebook at facebook.com/bestmagazine

PICTURE: *GETTY*

See the world through JENNY'S FUN-TINTED LENSES...

Our fabulous and funny columnist, comedian **Jenny Eclair**, is here to tell it like it is, in her own witty way...

HELLO, 2023!

Here she comes, another year, and with it a mighty slew of articles encouraging us all to lose weight, get fit and eat more fermented vegetables. Which would be fine, if the New Year started somewhere around the end of March, but how can we be expected to get off the sofa in January? How can we lose weight, when there are still leftover roast potatoes and that Stilton/stollen/panettone, still awaiting consumption, and why would we want to venture out in our new running shoes when we could slip on that patch of ice and end up in plaster for the rest of the year?

January is a month that needs careful handling; personally I don't think we need to rush things. I may not get out of bed until the fifth and it might take me another week to get fully dressed, never mind leave the house. January shouldn't be spent starving yourself and re-joining the gym, it should be spent playing with your new toys and doing nothing more strenuous than completing a big jigsaw puzzle on the kitchen table.

Don't get me wrong, I don't want to get any fatter and my blood pressure could do with coming down a few digits, but I'm hoping that walking the grandson around in his pram will take care of the bum and the heart because, when it comes to exercise, babies are quite useful, a bit like dogs.

To be honest, my only New Year's resolution is to see more of my mates. I'm not talking about being more sociable,I don't want to go to more parties, parties are pretty tricky in your 60s because you can't hear a word anyone says, and you never know if those measly canapés are going to be it for food. No, parties be damned, I want to sit face to face with old chums and have a good laugh.

I also want to see more art and do more drawing, I'd like to master figures and landscapes, I want to do lino cuts and use more than one colour of ink. Oh, and I want to write another book, I so badly want to write another book, but if another book doesn't come, then as long as I've got friends and hobbies and things to go and see, then hopefully I will get through 2023 without going mad!

Fingers crossed, eh?!

'I may not get out of bed until the fifth'

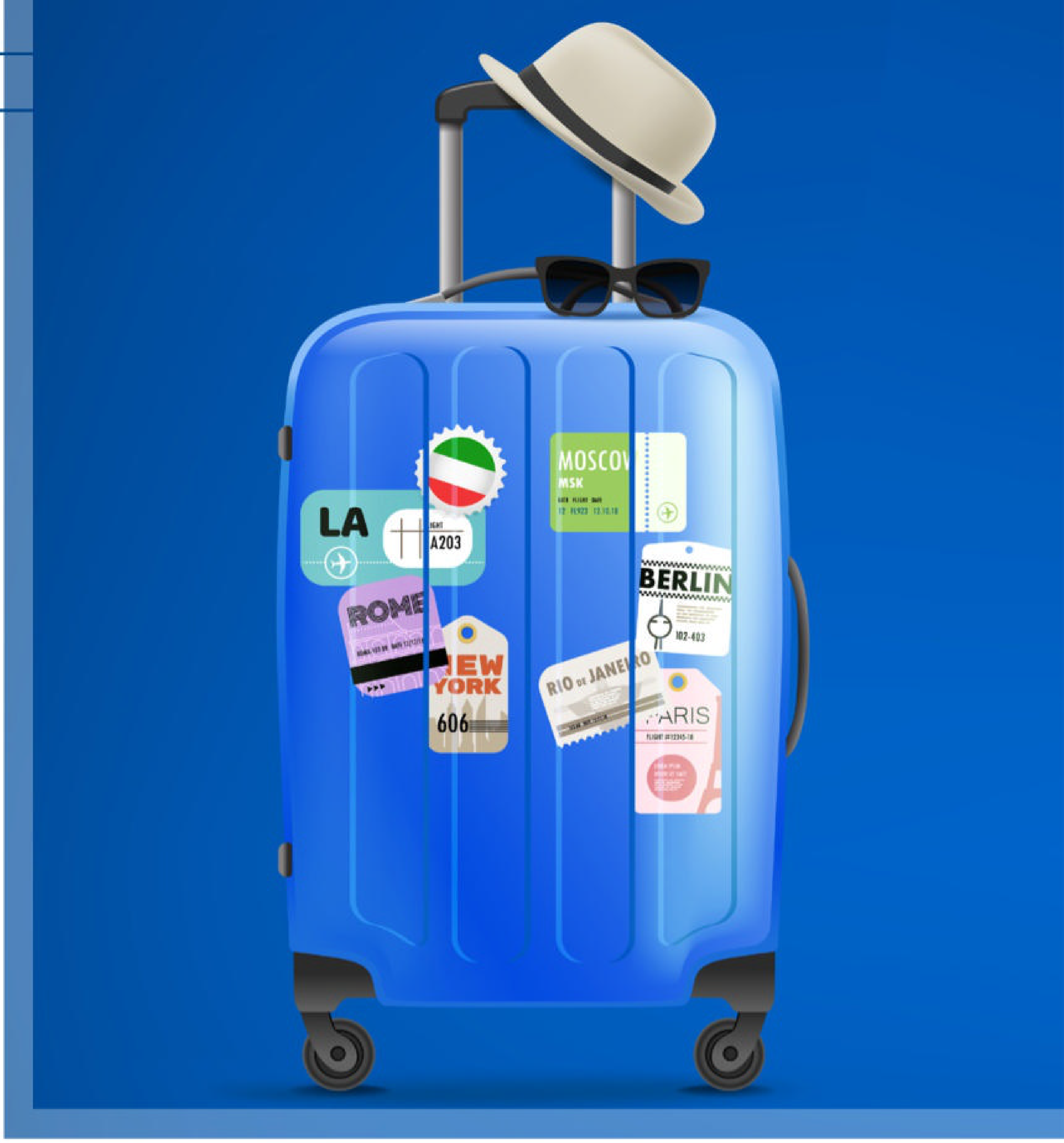
Jenny favours catch-ups with pals over wild nights out

January is a time to rest and recuperate

Instagram/jennyeclair1960

Is a wintry run worth the risk?

PICTURES: ALAMY, GETTY, INSTAGRAM



Boiling the kettle, Hester flicked on the radio. 'It's New Year's Day!' trilled the upbeat DJ. 'If you're waking up with a sore head from last night's celebrations, here's Elvis to get you rocking!'

Hester didn't have a sore head – not from over-indulging, anyway.

She'd stayed in and counted down the chimes of Big Ben. Then, just as promised, her son Aaron had FaceTimed from Australia. They'd had a lovely chat and he'd turned his phone around to show her the family in the garden enjoying the sunshine. It had been 11am on New Year's Day over there.

She'd ached to reach through the screen and give him a massive hug. If anyone had hummed *Auld Lang Syne* at that point, she'd have been reduced to a puddle.

Smiling as she thought of Aaron, his wife Cindy and their little boy Greg, she carried her coffee into the living room and glanced out of the window, surprised to see a figure huddled in the wooden bus shelter across the road.

It was a young girl. Parked next to her scuffed trainers was a blue suitcase. It seemed to be covered in stickers.

Hester grabbed her mobile to confirm there were no buses running on New Year's Day. Maybe the girl was waiting for a pick-up by car?

But it was freezing and she wasn't wearing gloves. She'd be as blue as her suitcase in a minute. Meanwhile, her hunched body language gave Hester cause for concern. Grabbing her own coat, she trotted across the road. 'Hello there!'

The girl looked up warily, Hester noticing dry tear tracks on her cheeks.

'Um, bus services don't resume till tomorrow. Don't want you waiting for a bus that's never turning up.'

The girl sighed. 'Story of my life, to be honest.'

'Perhaps a tad melodramatic,' observed Hester.

'What would you know?' flashed the girl. 'Go away and leave me alone!'

> **SHE WAS SURPISED TO SEE A GIRL HUDDLED IN THE BUS SHELTER**

Hester bit her lip. 'I'm sorry. My granddad had a suitcase like that. He kept a ventriloquist's dummy in it, scary-looking thing. He played end-of-the-pier shows.'

'If he comes by on his penny farthing, I'll be sure to buy a ticket.'

Hester laughed. The girl was feisty and clearly intelligent.

Hester pointed across the road. 'If it gets too parky, I'm at 58. I've got a hot drink with your name on it.'

She left, knowing better than to push it.

Back in her house, she kept an eye on the bus shelter and was just about to give up when the girl suddenly marched over, pulling her blue suitcase.

'Glad you changed your mind,' smiled Hester, opening the front door.

'I'm not coming in. No offence but I don't know you. I'll have a drink out here, if it's going.'

'I understand. Coming up.'

Hester left her in the porch and brought out a mug of coffee. 'Thanks,' said the girl, hazel eyes assessing Hester over the steaming rim. 'Don't mean to be rude.'

'You're being sensible.' Hester bent to inspect the suitcase stickers, transfixed by their bright colours. 'Cairo! Hawaii! Sri Lanka! Wow, you've been to all these places?'

'No – but I plan to. The case was my Christmas present to my boyfriend but right now, all that's in it are a few clothes, my phone, wallet and keys. We've always wanted to travel and promised ourselves we'd do it this year. So I bought the case and added stickers for places we want to see the most – I know you're s'posed to do that after you've visited them...'

As she trailed off, Hester said robustly, 'I like your idea, too. Back in the day, hotels designed stickers for guests to add to their luggage

The blue suitcase

BY GABRIELLE MULLARKEY

when they left, advertising the hotel and local attractions. The stickers became art forms.'

'You know a lot about old stuff,' the girl giggled, reminding Hester how young she was. Then her face fell. 'But Jordi, my boyfriend, said we'd have to wait another year, that we've not long been in our titchy flat and haven't saved enough... I asked if he was going off the whole idea or just going off me, we had a huge row last night and I stormed off this morning!' Her chin trembled. 'I forgot the buses weren't running.'

Hester noticed movement across the road and nodded towards it. 'Perhaps you were hoping Jordi would follow and catch up before you got too far?'

Following Hester's nod, the girl turned. A young bloke had just arrived at the bus stop, spotted the two women and was now approaching – uncertainly.

'I'll leave you to it,' said Hester diplomatically. 'Unless you'd both like to talk in my living room, out of the cold? I'll be in the kitchen.'

'Thanks,' said the girl, handing back the mug and adding shyly, 'I'm Amy.'

'Nice to meet you, Amy. I'm Hester.'

Ten minutes later, Hester's kitchen door opened, framing Amy and Jordi holding hands. Hester exhaled with relief, and not just because they were reunited. She'd had a scary few minutes wondering if they were burglars who used the suitcase as a pretext to gain entry and then carry away their swag!

'We're going home to talk properly,' announced Amy. 'Aren't we, babe?'

Jordi nodded. Hester wanted to ask how old they were, but that would be rude.

'How old are you anyway?' Jordi suddenly asked her.

'Forty-four and three quarters,' laughed Hester. 'Howze about you two?'

> **'I ASKED IF HE WAS GOING OFF THE IDEA OR JUST GOING OFF ME...'**

'We're both nearly 20,' said Jordi with an air that stressed their obvious maturity. 'We've just spent our first Christmas in our flat—'

'Titchy flat,' amended Amy.

'—and now we're supposed to visit my folks today and Amy's tomorrow.'

'We can still do that, babe,' Amy said. 'Thanks, Hester, for the coffee and stuff.'

'If you both walked here, I'll drive you home,' offered Hester, but they beamed at her, then at each other.

'Ta muchly,' said Amy, 'but we fancy a New Year's Day stroll.'

'Also, we can practise wheeling the suitcase over kerbs and stuff,' said Jordi.

On the doorstep, Amy turned to Hester with unexpected wisdom in her candid eyes. 'I expect we don't live too far from each other and might meet again. Happy new year, Hester, whatever you decide to do with it!'

Hester watched them trundle away, their fingers lightly intertwined on the silver handle of the blue suitcase. Maybe they wouldn't travel far this year. Maybe – lots of things. The year was only hours old and full of possibility.

Back indoors, she looked at her photos of Aaron and his lovely family, reliving her precious conversations with her only child.

They hadn't been in touch long. She had given up her baby son for adoption and, while she'd always held out hope he'd get in touch, never assumed it, leaving her details with the adoption service, just in case.

And now Aaron wanted her to come over this year to meet his family. 'Or we can come visit you soon,' he'd smiled – that smile so like her own.

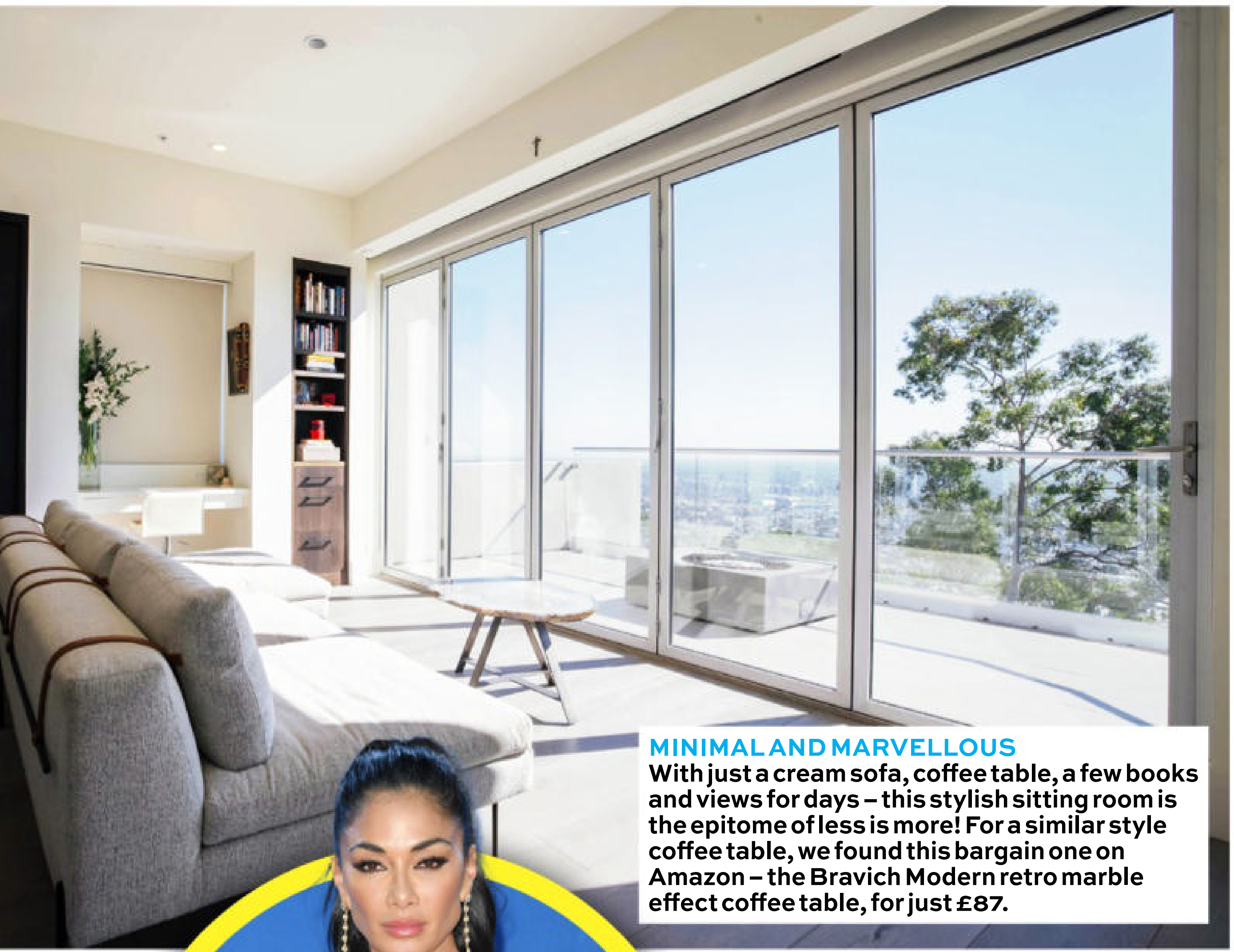
She thought of the blue suitcase and the hopes it enshrined. She thought of paths not travelled because of a choice she'd had to make as a girl no older than Amy.

She opened her new diary and wrote on the first page: 'Plan trip to Australia.'

Without realising it, the trip she'd been waiting to make for a lifetime.

PICTURE: GETTY

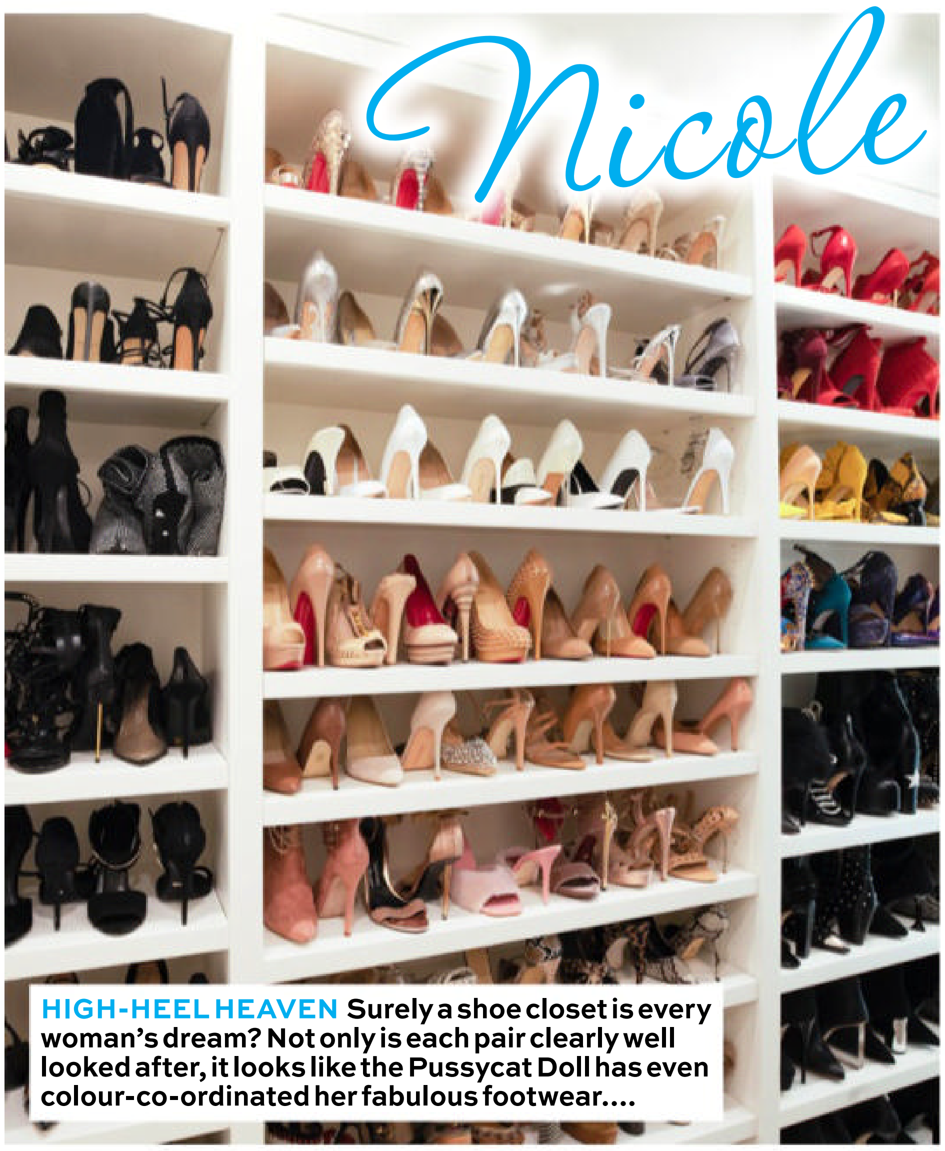
AT HOME Nicole



MINIMAL AND MARVELLOUS With just a cream sofa, coffee table, a few books and views for days – this stylish sitting room is the epitome of less is more! For a similar style coffee table, we found this bargain one on Amazon – the Bravich Modern retro marble effect coffee table, for just £87.

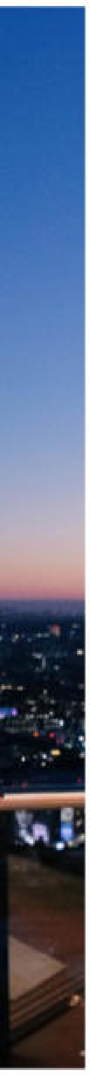
ROOM WITH A VIEW We'll just leave this here... The star's beautiful balcony view is out of this world!

FRESH FINISH The LA kitchen is simple and stylish. From looking at how clean it is, we wonder if it's actually ever used?!



HIGH-HEEL HEAVEN Surely a shoe closet is every woman's dream? Not only is each pair clearly well looked after, it looks like the Pussycat Doll has even colour-co-ordinated her fabulous footwear....

WORDS: DANIELLE SOUTHWOOD PICTURES: GETTY IMAGES

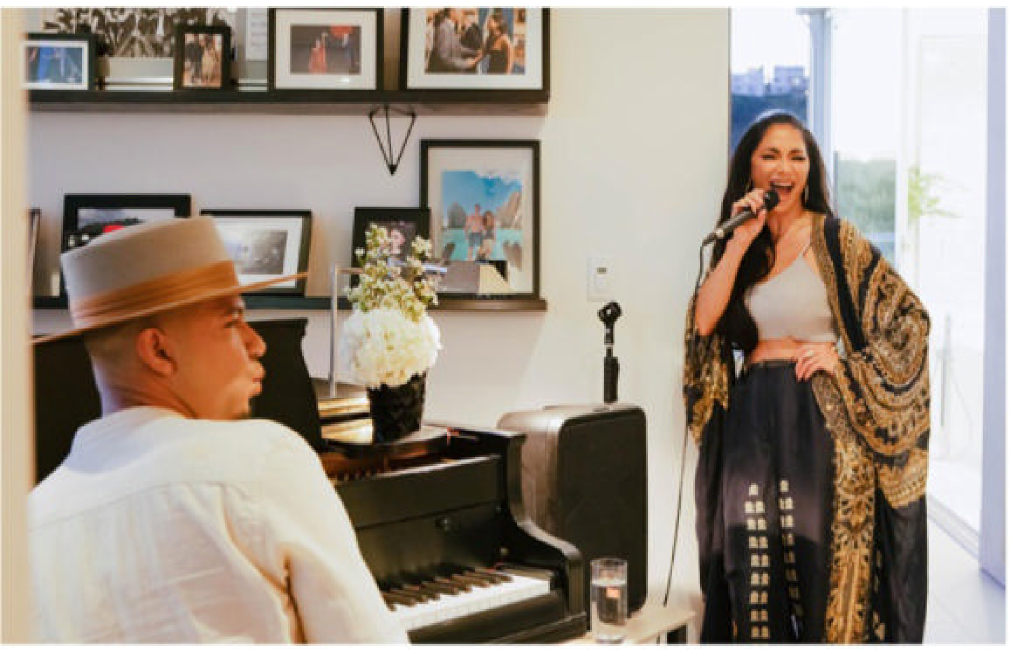


BARE IT ALL Nicole's all-white bathroom (with another sensational view) is pure luxury – let's hope there are some blinds on those windows or the paps will have a field day! A pop of colour with the occasional fresh bunch of flowers adds some life to the neutral tones.

BALCONY BRILLIANCE
Yes, that really is an outdoor bath you see on Nicole's balcony... we'd find you one for your home – but funnily enough, they're not as common in rainy UK!

WITH... *Scherzinger!*

Take a peep at singer Nicole Scherzinger's fresh and fabulous LA home...



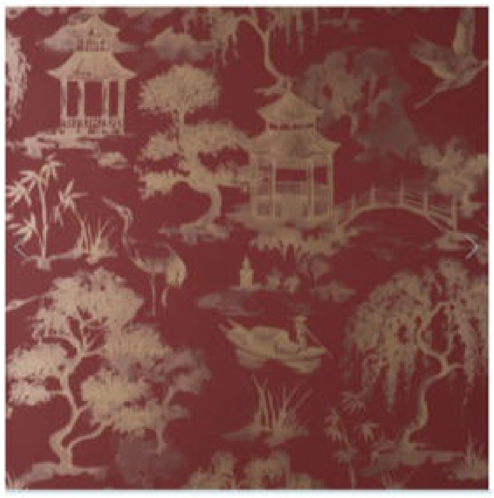
PLAY THAT FUNKY MUSIC
What's a home without music? Especially if you're In one of the biggest girlbands of all time. A piano and a microphone is a must. The sweet homely touches of photos around the walls add to it's warmth. Dunelm.com sells stunning black and white frames just like Nicole's from only £6.

LUSCIOUS LIVING
This monochrome living room is so stylish and simple to recreate with some black and white paint. It may be LA, but that fabulous fireplace looks incredibly appealing to us, too...

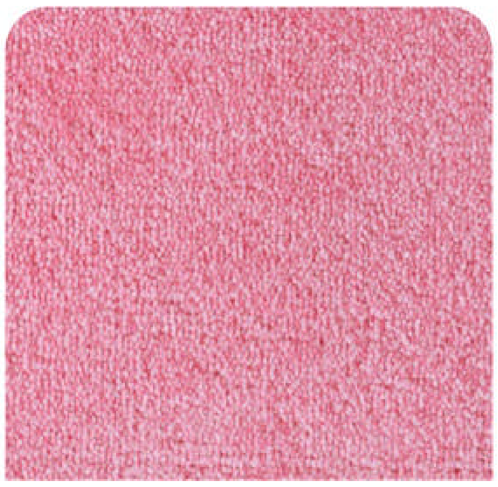
What's

Salamanca Red No 48 Paint, *£41.95 for 2.5L, VictoryColours.co.uk*

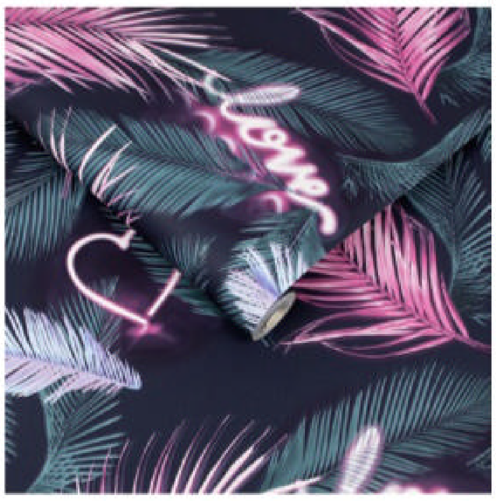
Mini Metro Red Wall Tiles, *£28.95 per m2, Tilemountain.co.uk*



Watercolour Scene Russet Wallpaper, *£12 per 10m roll, Dunelm*

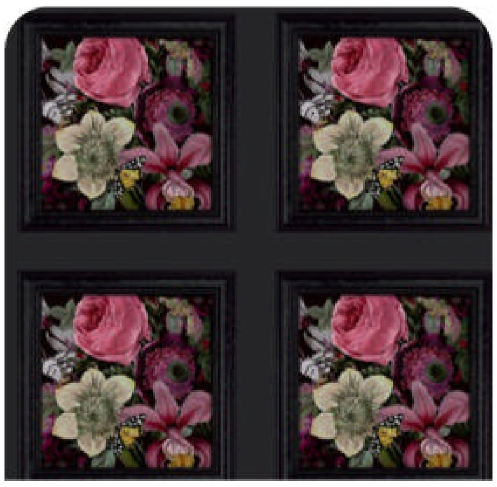


Firework Vibrant Carpet, *around £15.99 per m2, Lifestyle-Floors.co.uk*



Fresco Neon Love Wallpaper, *£15 per 5m roll, Homebase*

Pink Kiss No 49 Paint, *£41.95 for 2.5L, VictoryColours.co.uk*



Arthouse Stately Bouquet Charcoal Bright Floral Faux Panel Wallpaper, *£16.99 per 10m roll, The Range*

Durable Matt Emulsion Paint in Moody Hues, MH.23, *£35 for 2.5L, House Beautiful Collection at Homebase*

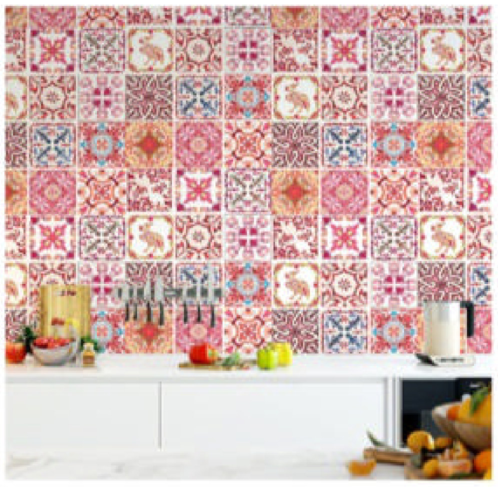
Pimlico Twist carpet in Blush Pink, *£13.99 per m2, Carpetright*

COMPILED BY: *CATHY LEVY* PRICES CORRECT AT TIME OF PUBLICATION BUT MAY VARY DUE TO SALES

HOT?

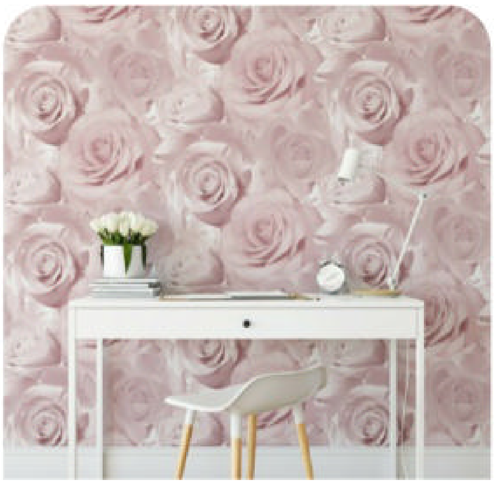
As Pantone announces its colour of the year, 2023 – Viva Magenta – we show you how to add this joyful family of hues into your life

Dulux Matt Paint in Berry Smoothie, *£19 per 2.5L, B&M*



Walplus Moroccan Rose Red Mosaic Wall Tile Stickers, *£7.49 for 24, Amazon*

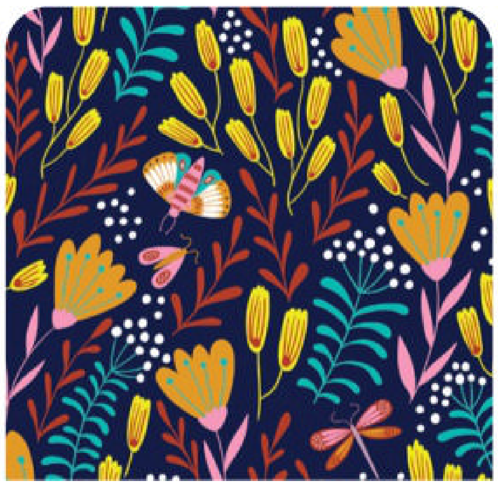
Muriva Pink Glitter Effect Embossed Wallpaper, *£26 per 3m roll, B&Q*



Muriva Bella Soft Pink Flower Rose Bloom 3D Effect Floral Designer Wallpaper, *£9.99 per 10m roll, B&Q*

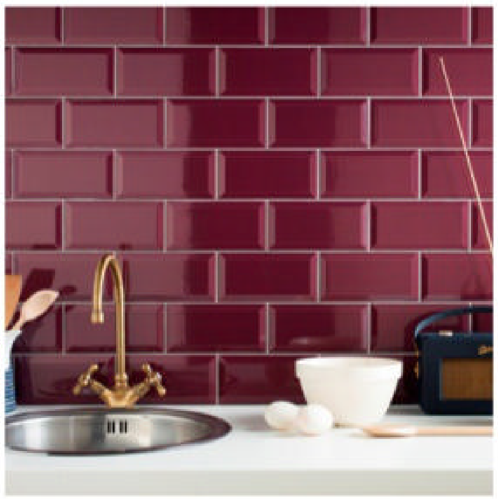
Trentie Blush Gloss Metro Ceramic Wall Tiles, *£15 per m2, B&Q*

Durable Matt Emulsion Paint in Think Pink, TP.24, *£35 for 2.5L, House Beautiful Collection at Homebase*



Garden of Eden Wallpaper in Indigo Blue, Sunshine Yellow and Teal, *£43 per 10m roll, LustHome.com*

Don Burgundy No.86 paint, *£41.95 for 2.5L, VictoryColours.co.uk*



Metro Plum Wall Tiles, *£20.95 per m2, Tilemountain.co.uk*

Curves are beautiful!

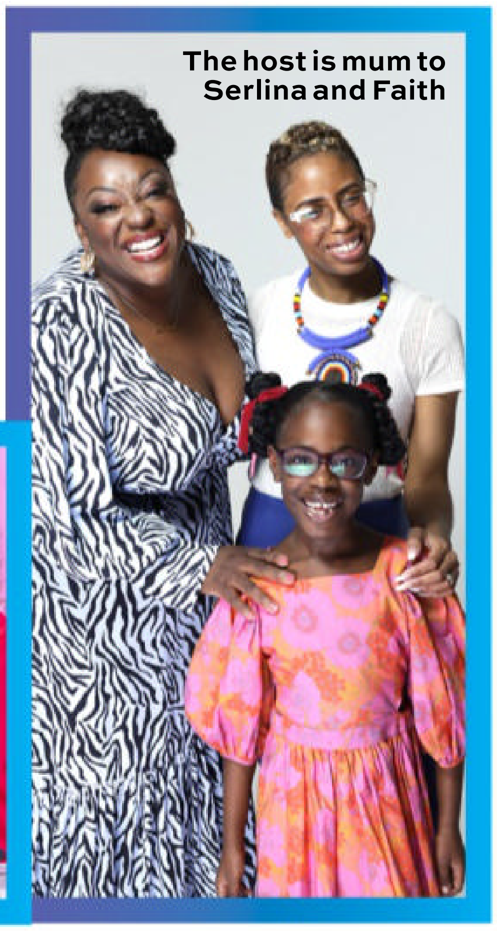
***Loose Women*'s funniest panellist, Judi Love, opens up about the power of a giggle, being body confident and why Idris Elba makes her smile…**

She's one of television's best-loved ladies, thanks to her hilarious one-liners and quick-witted humour, often reducing her fellow *Loose* ladies to tears of laughter. Growing up as the family 'comedian' who loved to mimic her mum, the youngest of five, Judi first made a name for herself on the stand-up comedy circuit over a decade ago. 'You always need to think what is funny about any situation,' she advises. 'It's healing.' Here, the 42-year-old single mum-of-two talks about her motto 'love is healing' – a very accurate insight into how she deals with life – why laughter helps us through trauma and why our shape is just something we all need to embrace…

Judi and Nadia Sawalha share a giggle on *Loose Women*

Judi, you're a funny lady. But do you think women are finally being taken more seriously in stand-up comedy?

It doesn't matter what anyone else thinks! If you have something to say – say it! Laughter is healing. Your platform shouldn't be limited to just the stage. Use social media or bounce jokes off friends, it's always worthwhile. [Check out her *Loose Women* clips on pants, big knickers versus thongs, and her issue with the Elephant and Castle roundabout, if you're in need of a quick giggle].



The host is mum to Serlina and Faith

Before you were famous, you once crept backstage to meet Idris Elba – have you been in touch?

[Laughs]. Yes! I've seen him since and he's lovely.

On a more serious note, you recently made a documentary, *Black, Female and Invisible*, for C4…

If laughter is healing, then knowledge is power! I think it's something black women can relate to. Black History Month is October but to someone with colour – my history is being made every day. I always celebrate my Jamaican roots because they're in everything I do.

Looking smokin' in an outfit from her own Very line

Instagram/ljudilove

The mum-of-two keeps her kids out of the limelight

Judi once crept backstage to see Idris Elba!

You've released your own Very clothing line. Are you body confident?
I've struggled with certain areas over the years. I remember looking back at a picture of me when I was about 19 years old, and thinking to myself, 'Oh my gosh'. I looked all right but I was so concerned about my shape and my size when I was that age, that I spent most of that time worrying about it. I now realise you rob yourself of the present by doing that.

What body parts do you struggle with?
I always grab a bit of my belly, or pinch a part of my thigh. Everyone has bits that they don't like or parts they want to change, and that's OK. Take your time and do what you need to do but remember you are beautiful just the way you are, and you've been made like that for a reason.

Curves are very much in right now, aren't they?
You know, it's a strange thing. People have put out this idea that curves weren't desirable. However, if you look back in history, especially through art, you'll find there were always curvy women. Always. I think that belief was eventually suppressed by society, and curves were no longer deemed beautiful, which is sad – because they absolutely are!

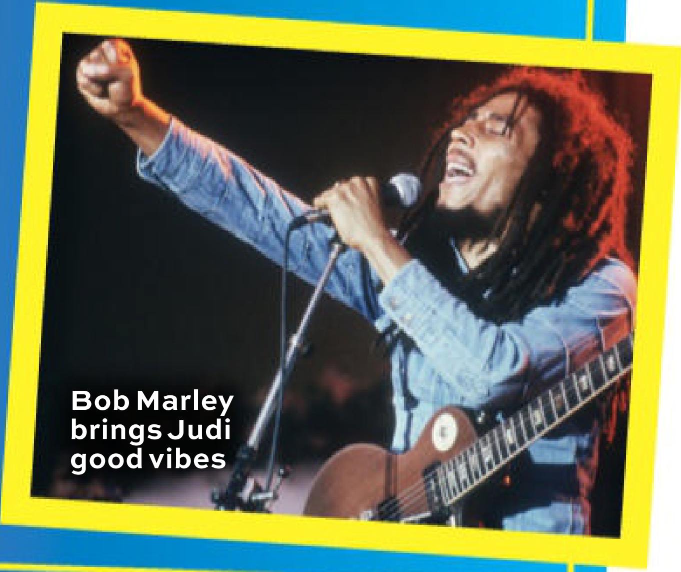
As a single mum, what advice would you give to single parents out there, feeling the strain?
Try to find your tribe. And by that I mean the people who can support or tag team with you. I recall how other mothers would babysit for me, and I would cook for them in return. We'd combine the two and make it work.

There is such a stigma against single mums, so start by removing that label. Parenting is difficult whether you've got a partner or not. So you need to celebrate each day your children are fed, clothed and you can give them a cuddle. Sometimes it's about taking it down to the simplest of things.

● **Check out Judi's collection at very.co.uk**

Growing up laughing...

Asked what being Jamaican and growing up in London meant, Judi said: 'Being Jamaican was food and laughter. It didn't matter what situation happened, my mum being unwell, being a single parent – there was always laughter – to me it was good vibes and good music. Bob Marley's music – in my mind, I was actually related to him!' Later, she added: Just try to laugh – even at yourself. That feeling of laughter is healing.' You bet it is...



Bob Marley brings Judi good vibes

WORDS: *JULIE ANN TRAINOR* PICTURES: *GETTY, INSTAGRAM, SHUTTERSTOCK*

This week's must-see TV

1
NEWS
DISGRACED
ON BAIL

1 Stonehouse

TUESDAY AND WEDNESDAY, 9PM, ITV, ALSO AVAILABLE IN FULL ON ITVX

Real-life couple Keeley Hawes and Matthew Macfadyen team up to tell the extraordinary true story of ambitious MP John Stonehouse. Set in the Sixties and Seventies, the three-part series, which kicked off on Monday, charts the rise and fall of Stonehouse (Macfadyen). At first, his political career is booming and he's also got a seemingly idyllic family life alongside wife Barbara (Hawes) and their kids. But he's got two secret relationships – one with a Czech spymaster and the other with his mistress. He sees no other way out and conjures up a mad plan to disappear off the face of the Earth...

2 The Kardashians: Billion Dollar Dynasty

SUNDAY, 9PM, C4

You would have to have been living under a rock not to have heard of the Kardashians. But how did they become so famous? This two-part programme charts their rise, featuring rarely seen archive footage and interviews with close friends and experts. It kicks off with a look at a younger Kim and her mission to become the most famous person in the world – whatever the cost.

COMING UP

PAMELA: A LOVE STORY

Everyone thinks they know Pamela Anderson's story – especially after Hulu's *Pam & Tommy*, starring Lily James and Sebastian Stan, hit our TV screens last year. Now, though, the actor and pop culture icon is telling her story, her way, with a new documentary over at Netflix. She has said, 'I was very hesitant, but looking back, I feel empowered.' **Headed to Netflix soon.**

CATCH UP

FIREFLY LANE S2

Growing up is tough – first loves, jobs, and heartbreak. Best friends Kate and Tully are back to continue their story, based on Kristin Hannah's novel. Starring Katherine Heigl and Sarah Chalke. **On Netflix now.**

3

3 The Apprentice

THURSDAY, 9PM, BBC ONE

We're back in the boardroom as Lord Alan Sugar returns alongside aides Karren Brady and series one winner Tim Campbell to see who has the business brains to be crowned this year's champ. Things kick off in style as the candidates jet to Antigua to run and sell tours of the Caribbean island. So who will have the holiday of a lifetime, and who will be sent home packing?

4 Silent Witness

TUESDAY, 9PM, BBC ONE

Can you believe we're on series 26 of the popular crime drama? When a man tumbles to his death from a high-rise, Dr Nikki Alexander (Emilia Fox) and the team are caught up in the dangerous underworld of a mafia group. The first episode of this week's two-parter aired on Monday.

4

£1,500,000
£1,250,000
£1,000,000
£750,000
£500,000

5

5 Ant and Dec's Limitless Win

SATURDAY, 8.30PM, ITV

Imagine starting the New Year with a life-changing amount of money to do with as you please. Well, buckle in and see if any of *Limitless Win*'s contestants have what it takes to do exactly that. Back for a second series, dynamic Geordie duo Ant and Dec host the quiz series with a twist – the world's first limitless jackpot up for grabs.

SHE SAID WHAT?!

After the devastating sudden death of her husband, Stephen 'tWitch' Boss (former DJ on The Ellen Degeneres Show) just days after the couple's ninth wedding anniversary, presenter and dancer Allison Holker, 34, said in a statement, 'Stephen, we love you, we miss you, and I will always save the last dance for you.'

Big Soap Story

CORONATION STREET

After Lauren receives a warning phone call from her dad, Max begins to put two and two together and fights against time to tell the cobbles' residents about Griff's plans for the Peace Market. Meanwhile, as Roy leaves the hospital, he continues to blame himself for Nina's accident and decides he needs to make a big change. Plus, Gemma stages a sit-in protest at Joseph's school until they say they'll teach sign language.

EMMERDALE

Leyla hits rock bottom with the stress of work – and then she finds out that Bernice and Liam shared a New Year's Eve moment. She and Liam come to blows and she crumbles and calls Callum to arrange to meet. What will torn Leyla do next? Meanwhile, Bernice gets on Mandy's bad side as she and Bob make plans for the B&B, Dawn makes a drastic decision, and Marlon and Rhona are exasperated with April's attitude.

EASTENDERS

After Phil clashes with Keanu and faces the wrath of Karen and Sharon, Phil's fuming when he discovers he's been double-crossed. And when Kat and Tommy are kidnapped, Phil decides to sort things out his own way. Elsewhere, in the aftermath of the carbon monoxide leak, Harvey accuses Nish of being responsible, as Suki receives a phone call about the true culprit. Billy's also in for a tough week when he realises he's facing life in prison.

Kevin Whately
Neil Dudgeon

Midsomer Murders

BEHIND THE SCENES WITH *best*

'We pretty much filmed in George Clooney's garden...'

Midsomer Murders celebrates Neil Dudgeon's 50th episode as the show's lead detective, DCI John Barnaby, with a corker of a case set in the world of an amateur operatic society. Rehearsals for Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Pirates of Penzance* – featuring the singing talents of Sarah Barnaby (Fiona Dolman) – are interrupted by the discovery of a body, so Barnaby and Winter (Nick Hendrix) – with pathologist Fleur Perkins (Annette Badland) – take to the stage to investigate. Here, Neil, 62, tells us more...

Did you ever imagine you'd make so many episodes?
Nobody in their right mind as an actor would think: 'I'm taking a job for the next few months and it's going to last 12 years...

'I've had jobs start at seven o'clock in the morning and finish by lunchtime. The idea it was going to go on and on was, sort of, inconceivable.

Did you get cake to celebrate?
A great big cake with bodies strewn on top! I hadn't even realised it was the 50th episode, so it came as rather a surprise.

It's a great cast...
A tremendous cast. We've got Samantha Spiro and Jenna Russell, who've won Olivier Awards for musicals, and they don't even sing in the episode! You've got Clive Rowe, Alex Hanson and Shobna Gulati. It's joyous. And, of course, Kevin Whately as well.

Yes, Barnaby meets Lewis. Well, sort of...
The cherry on the icing of the great big cake was having Kevin Whately. I've been an admirer since *Auf Wiedersehen, Pet*. He's the master. He makes it look easy. If you mention Kevin to anybody in the business, the first thing they say is: 'Oh, lovely Kevin Whately...' It's like Kevin is his middle name and his real name is Lovely.

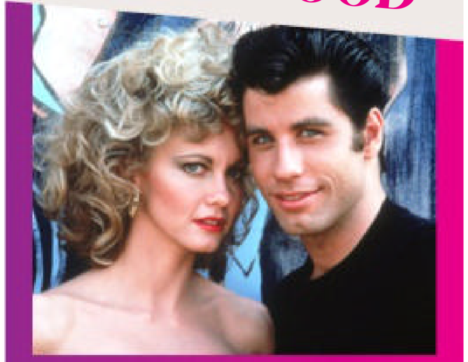
Fiona Dolman

You filmed the episode almost in George Clooney's back garden – at the famous theatre, The Mill at Sonning…
We're pretty much in George's garden, yeah. We didn't see him, but I gather he sponsors the theatre and goes to the pub and buys rounds for the locals.

Any resolutions for 2023?
Write more, paint more and get back into yoga. I've never been to Japan or South America and I'd very much like to go. I don't know if they get *Midsomer*. I'll go and see whether I get people pointing at me in the street.

● ***Midsomer Murders*** **is on ITV1 on Sunday, 8 January at 8pm**

HITS FROM HOLLYWOOD



GREASE

Available on Netflix

The musical classic, set in an American high school, is the perfect flick to put a smile on your face. Starring John Travolta and the late, great Olivia Newton-John as on/off and then on again lovers Sandy and Danny.

JERRY MAGUIRE

Available on Netflix

An oldie, but a goodie. Tom Cruise stars as a top sports agent for a big company who is fired and decides to go it alone, when he has a moral epiphany. But does he have what it takes to win the big contracts?

JURASSIC WORLD: DOMINION

Available on Amazon Prime from Friday

A Hollywood megacast, including Chris Pratt and Laura Dern, star in the final instalment in the *Jurassic World* trilogy. Dinosaurs are now roaming the Earth, while a genetically engineered swarm of giant insects wreak similar havoc.

MUSICAL MOMENTS

WEST END MUSICAL BRUNCH, LONDON

Ready for some feel-good fun with the girls?! In a secret London location, this West End Musical Brunch will have you revelling in five hours of stunning performances, as you tuck into a bottomless meal. **Tickets from £69.95, designmynight.com/london/event-space/secret-london-location/west-end-musical-brunch-58**

LUCKY VOICE, UK-WIDE

They say singing is good for the soul, so get ready to warble and wait for the endorphin rush! Promising some of the best girls' nights out, Lucky Voice has all you need: two hours in a private karaoke booth, alongside quirky props, signature cocktails and plenty to eat. **For more info, see luckyvoice.com**

BLUE DOG, GLASGOW

A veritable Glasgow institution since it opened its doors in 2013, keep the Winter chill at bay at this classy, New York-style piano bar – which does not only a great line in cocktails, but is well-known for the international musicians it regularly welcomes. Open Wednesday to Sunday, until 3am… if you can stick the pace! **For more details, see bluedogglasgow.co.uk**

WELLNESS PODCASTS

Sleep With Me
Help falling asleep

SLEEP WITH ME

Insomnia? Mind racing? Worries keeping you up? Tune in for a bedtime story – borne from creator Drew Ackerman's childhood insomnia – which lets you forget your problems and gets progressively more boring, until you drop off!

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

FOOD FOR THOUGHT
RHIANNON LAMBERT

A great one-stop shop for all your nutrition know-how, *Food for Thought*, with UK-based nutritionist Rhiannon Lambert, equips you with all the evidence-based advice you need to live and breathe a healthy lifestyle.

WALK TO WELLBEING
H&W
PODCAST

WALK TO WELLBEING

In each episode of this wellness and walking podcast, you'll join a celebrity who takes you on one of their favourite walks, sharing their wellness journeys as they go. Expect little tricks, big life lessons and a few secrets.

WORDS: *DANIELLE SOUTHWOOD* PICTURES: *BBC, BSKYB, GETTY, ITV, NETFLIX, SPOTIFY*

‘It’s the Only Way Is Sicily!’

Amanda Holden and Alan Carr have reunited for their very own ‘Italian Job’, and their adventures make for TV gold...

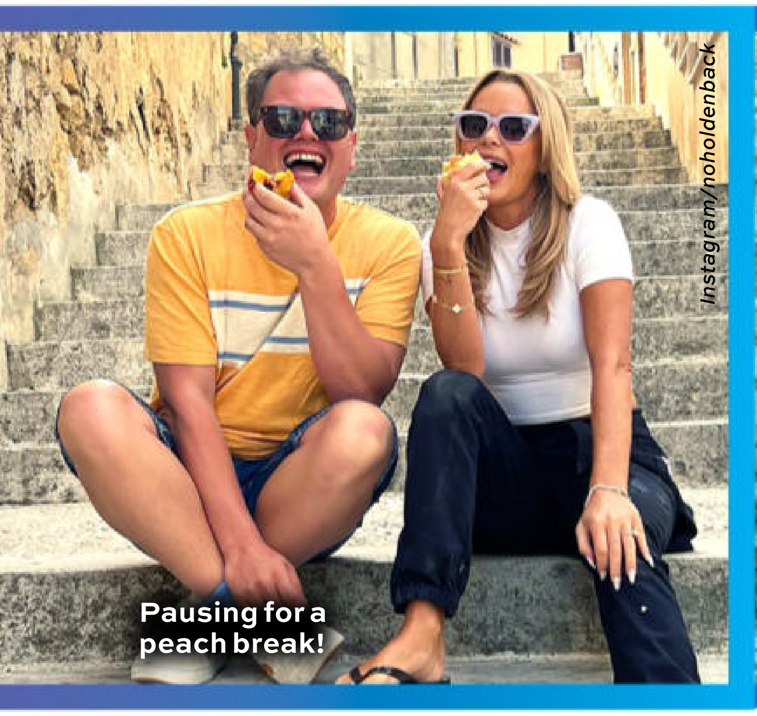
Funnyman Alan Carr and *BGT* judge Amanda Holden go back a long way – so when they ended up somehow buying a holiday home together in Sicily, they decided they couldn’t let it go by without documenting their journey, in a once-in-a-lifetime TV show! The hilarious pair, who laughed their way through most of this interview together, revealed how the idea came about, why Alan doesn’t trust Amanda’s taste in men – and why they’ll always be the best of friends...

Amanda, you bought this Italian property on the island of Sicily – was it always Alan you had in mind to help?

Amanda: Always Alan. I had the idea and knew it would be good. Alan and I are great friends, we’ve done the *DNA Journey* show together before obviously. I saw him for the first time actually in the flesh after discussing this idea, when we were in Sicily to start the show!

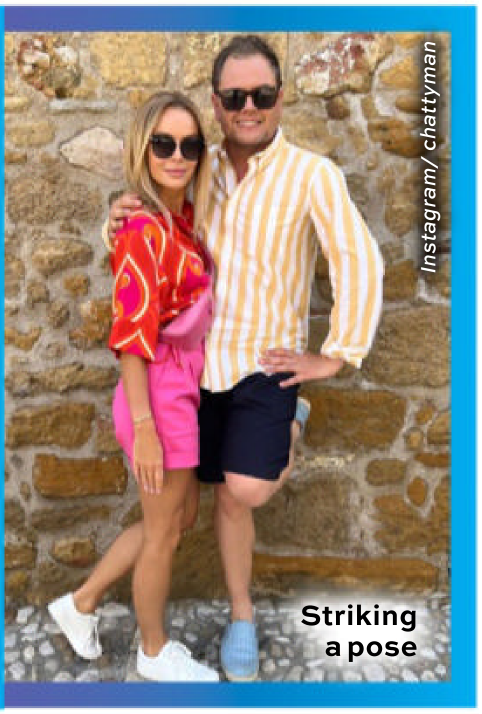
Alan: Yes, she had this ‘fantastic’ idea after looking at photos of the place in black and white – it was mad.

Amanda: We chose this particular place because the location and everything was brilliant – it was even near the airport.



Instagram/noholdenback

Pausing for a peach break!



Instagram/ chattyman

Striking a pose

‘THERE’S NO EGO WITH US...’ - ALAN

Was it fun to do this together?

Alan: It’s been great fun. Amanda is a ‘do-er’, she just gets on with it! I’m like ‘Yeah, yeah, let’s get a holiday home...’ and she then actually goes and gets a holiday home!

Amanda: One of the nicest things for us was to invest into these run-down areas. You’re giving people jobs and shining a light on Sicily.

Alan: It’s the closest we’ve come to a reality show!

Amanda: It’s The Only Way is Sicily!

Did you get a lot of attention while filming out there?

Alan: I got this DM on Instagram

Amanda and Alan bring the laughs – or should that be cackles?!

Amanda in Sicily with her girls Hollie and Lexi

Instagram/ noholdenback

The Italian adventure is the first time the pair have worked together

from someone saying, 'Oh Alan, we're a gay couple with a child and we're thinking of moving there, will we get judged?' And I said unless the dogs are homophobic – then you're all right... we never saw anyone! There were certainly no women, just dogs.

Amanda: Until 4,000 people descended after going to this festival. A total carb festival.

Alan: We were a bit cynical about it at first, this pasta festival. But it was really lovely and heartwarming. All the families come together.

Amanda: They were hand-making the pasta while drinking and listening to music – the dream, but the people we did meet were all very friendly and happy to have us in their hometown. Sometimes there's a bit of attitude towards second-home people, but I think they were all embracing this investment, and obviously because we had a TV crew there, everyone's going to want to holiday there next year – it's the ultimate escapism.

Did you end up visiting the Museum of Bread?

Alan: I did, yes!

Amanda: Sadly, I was unavailable.

Alan: She went to the beach! It was a bit tongue-in-cheek – but actually, the man was so proud of his bread I couldn't take the p***... and actually I was a total convert by the end, thinking, 'What's in the gift shop?! Perhaps a baguette fridge magnet?'

Amanda, you know what you like. Was it quite easy to mould Alan to your taste?

Alan: Er, yeah!

Amanda: Alan's really reasonable and really lovely. But I feel like he likes to be guided, more than to guide.

Alan: I don't mind you guiding me when it comes to doing the house up, but then she's asking Italian men to go on dates with me, who, may I add, don't have many teeth – that's where I draw the line! So yeah, I did try to stick up for myself when it comes to Amanda. She wasn't that bad... she let me do my own bedroom, aren't I lucky?

Your friendship comes across so strongly in this. How did you first meet?

Amanda: We can't really remember how we first met! It was always at some do. I went on his show countless times and then we started going to dinner together. For years we've spent time together, but we've never been on holiday together before. Everyone said we should work together. But we said we're too similar. I describe myself as a gay man in a straight woman's body. And Alan describes himself pretty much the same. He is one of the most down-to-earth people. What you see is what you get with Alan.

Alan: There's no ego with us. We have the same cackle and I often wondered if we cackle together, it could sound quite nice if we harmonise... But yeah we're not showbiz friends, we're genuine friends. And since this show, we're talking more. We're texting pretty much every day. Whereas before it would be every fortnight. It's lovely.

● **Amanda & Alan's Italian Job begins this Friday, 6 January, at 8.30pm on BBC One and iPlayer.**

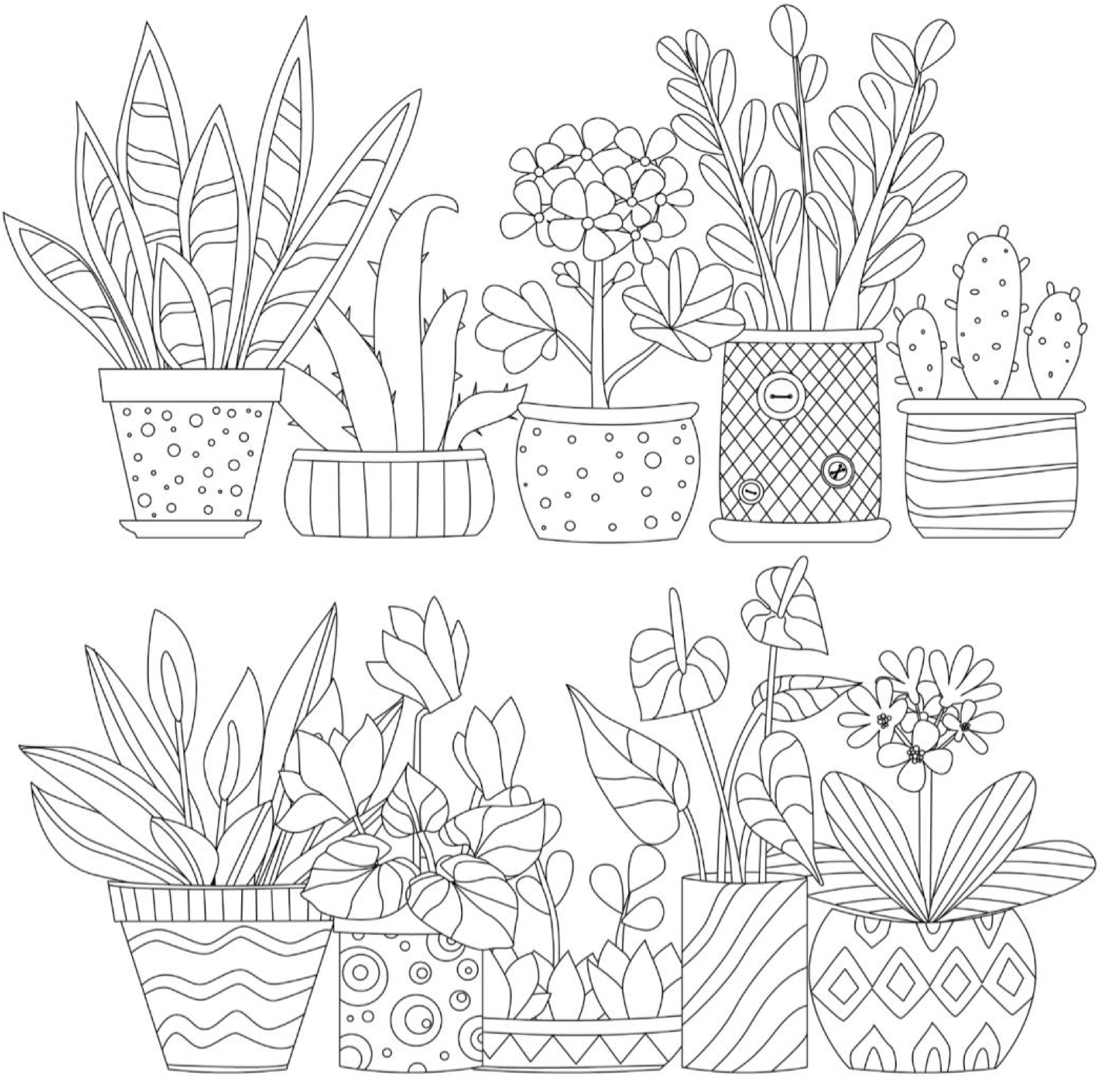
The Big Bathroom Debate

Chatting to *best* about his new show with pal Amanda, Alan revealed that his biggest decorating debate with the Heart Radio presenter was 'whether we should have a bidet in the bathroom, or a disco ball... Amanda was pro disco ball and I was team bidet!' But who won – or did they get both?! You'll just have to tune in to find out...

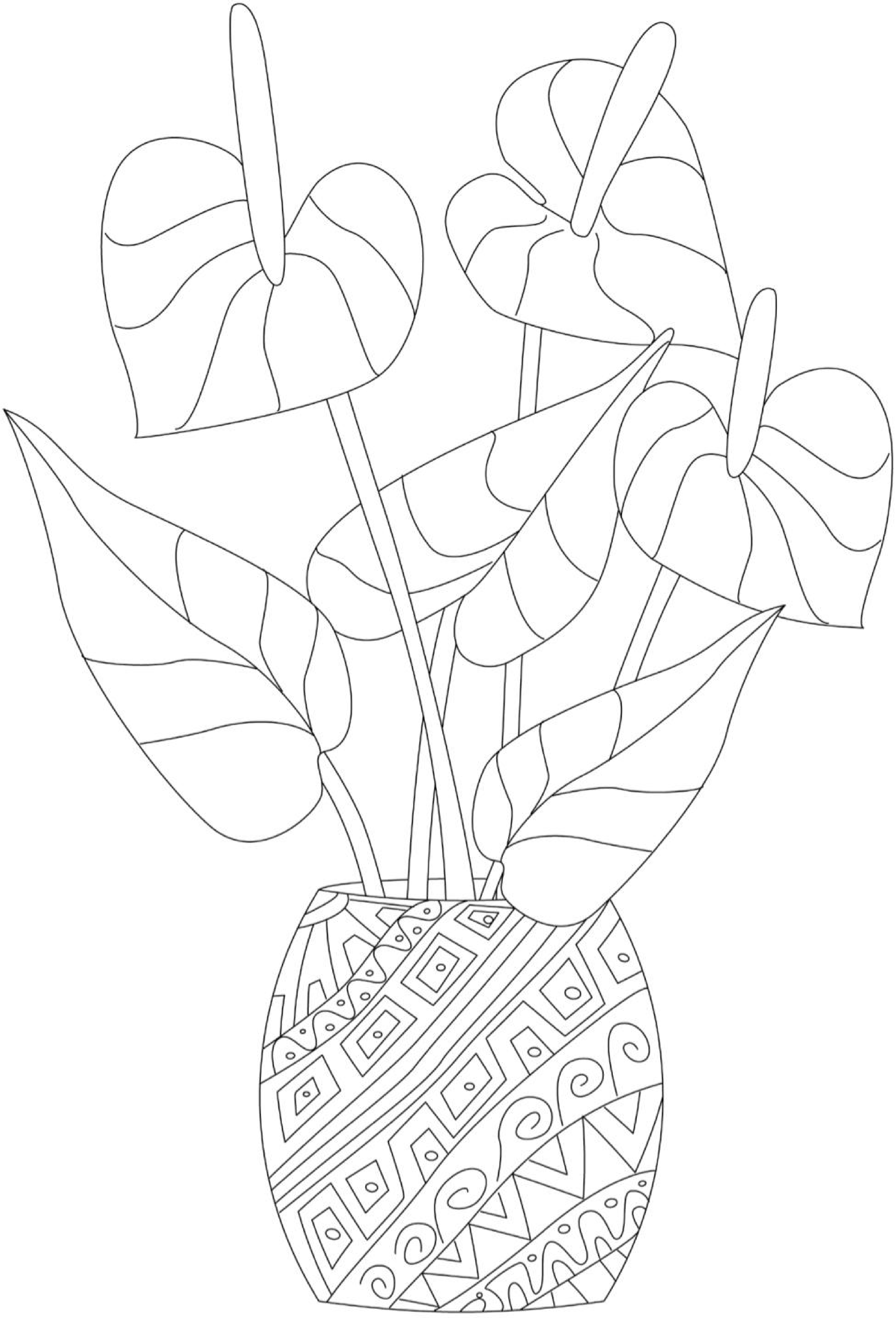
WORDS: *DANIELLE SOUTHWOOD* PICTURES: *BBC, GETTY, INSTAGRAM*

Colour therapy

Take some time out to relax and unwind...



PICTURES: *GETTY*



Fun AT HOME

If you need something to help keep your brain busy – look no further. Grab a pen and flex those intellectual muscles with these tantalising puzzles...

SEARCH ME!

Can you find the bodies of water in the grid? They will be placed only once and may be either horizontal, vertical or diagonal and go either forwards or backwards. There is one word listed that isn't in the grid – can you work out which one it is?

BAY
BIGHT
BOURN
BROOK
CANAL
CHANNEL
COVE
CREEK
GLACIER
GULF
LAGOON
LAKE
LOCH
MARSH
OCEAN
POOL
SEA
STRAIT
WADI
WASH

C	F	V	P	P	D	E	H	L	O	Q	I	G	H	Q
G	Q	A	B	R	U	Q	R	W	O	D	L	O	C	H
H	N	C	H	A	N	N	E	L	L	O	G	U	L	F
I	V	D	B	R	O	O	K	F	A	H	P	U	I	R
Y	S	Z	S	Y	I	J	G	F	N	J	U	H	Z	Z
R	D	C	R	E	A	P	M	N	A	M	O	P	C	Y
E	E	Z	V	F	M	B	V	Y	C	H	C	R	D	C
I	U	O	K	L	N	X	T	Q	D	O	E	W	H	N
C	C	F	N	A	O	S	T	E	W	E	A	T	S	F
A	N	K	U	K	O	K	S	I	K	A	N	Y	A	K
L	B	K	U	E	G	E	H	U	A	W	D	C	W	U
G	O	Y	N	P	A	W	T	Y	L	R	D	I	U	Z
V	U	Z	H	A	L	P	Q	X	X	S	T	W	I	E
B	R	F	D	M	E	P	I	I	C	I	R	S	O	L
L	N	X	A	W	K	G	Z	T	A	B	I	G	H	T

SUDOK-GO!

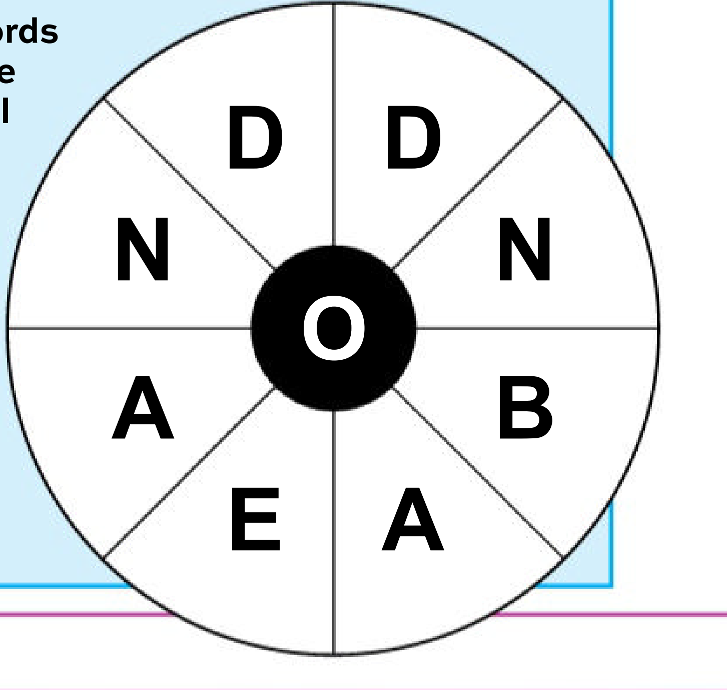
Fill the grid using the numbers from 1 to 9 only. Each number must appear once in every column, row and 3x3 square. Now, off you sudok-go!

				4	5		2	
4				8	6	5		
1			3			9	4	
						8	1	7
9			4		8			5
5	1	8						
	2	1			4			9
		6	7	5				2
	5		8	2				

	3				4		9	
		1			8	4		
	6		3				8	5
3				9		2	1	8
				7				
4	1	6		8				7
6	5				1		2	
		3	8			7		
	2		6				5	

WORD WHEEL

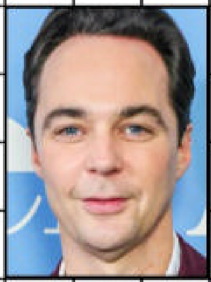
Find as many words of three or more letters in the wheel as you can. Each word must use the central letter and a selection from the outer wheel – no letter may be used more times than it appears in the wheel. Can you find the nine-letter word?



PICTURES: GETTY

CODE NAME

Each number from 1-26 represents a letter of the alphabet from A-Z. Every letter appears in the grid at least once, and is represented by just one number. Jim Parsons will help get you started with the numbers for J, I and M. Can you crack the entire code to complete the crossword grid? When you are finished, use the key grid to uncover a hidden word.

23	10	19	8	2	16	10	22	11		2		15
17		2				13		16	2	13	16	12
21	13	7	2	9		22		12		18		11
24		10		10	3	2	20	24		2	3	9
8	10	8	11	8			11			15		12
11		8		10	4	1 J	11	16	22	2	18	11
15	25	11	11	9				24		19		8
16				12	21	3	10	13	14	2	13	4
11		10	17	11				22		17		
13		3		8				11	26	2	17	11
22	8	10	2	13				13		22		13
		17		10				22	24	5		18
18	2	20	2	17	10	13	16	11				11
2		10		2				4	24	25	11	17
16	24	3	9	10	13	2	24	13		24		24
2		10			11			11	6	21	2	9
13	21	22		15	22	10	20	15		13		3
2		2		12		2		15	11	4	20	11
22	8	24	18	11		4				11		13
5		13		4	2	15	16	8	11	4	2	22

A B C D E F G H ~~I~~ ~~J~~ K L ~~M~~
N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
J	I	M										

14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26

YOUR KEY WORD GRID:

22	8	11	10	4	3	2	17	17

KRISS KROSS

Can you fit all the home furnishings into the grid to complete the puzzle? Some words may initially fit in more than one place, but there is only one way to fit all the words together. The solution is below.

4 LETTERS
BATH
SOAP
SOFA
VASE

5 LETTERS
BASIN
BRUSH
DOORS

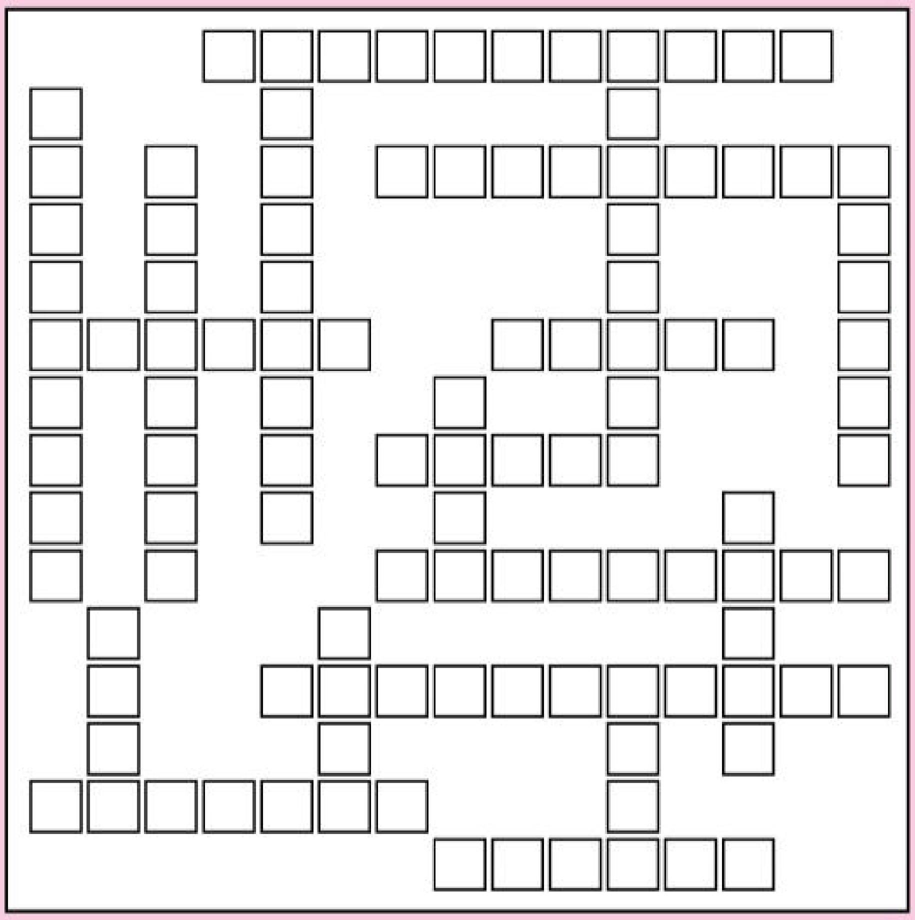
6 LETTERS
BASKET
CARPET
MIRROR

7 LETTERS
SHELVES

8 LETTERS
ANTIQUES
DOORBELL

9 LETTERS
HANDTOWEL
LAMPSHADE
LIGHT BULB
ORNAMENTS

11 LETTERS
CANDLESTICK
PHOTOGRAPHS



All puzzles are kindly supplied by Richardson Puzzles & Games. Their new *Large Print Colour & Frame – Calm* colouring book for adults contains 31 easy-colour illustrations with perforated page edges, so you can pull your artwork out of the book, then frame and display! Available to preorder now from hive.co.uk/richardson-puzzles and all other good book retailers.

RICHARDSON
PUZZLES & GAMES

NEW!
Large Print
Colour & Frame
Calm

SOLUTIONS

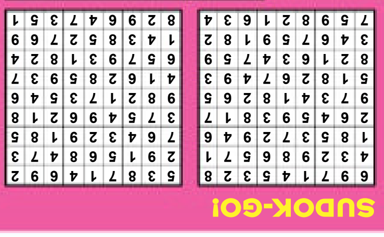
SEARCH ME

Not hidden: Marsh

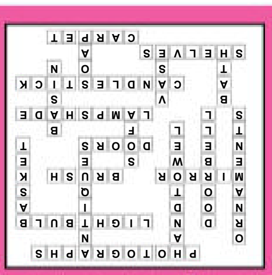
WORDWHEEL

Answer: Abandoned

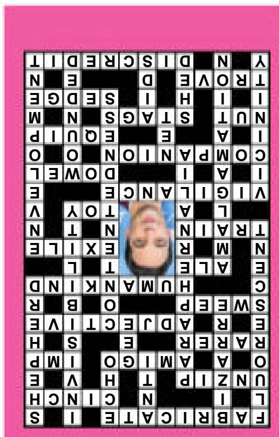
Words that can be made from the wheel include: abandon, abandoned, abode, ado, aeon, anode, anon, boa, bode, boded, bond, bonded, bone, boned, dado, doe, don, done, donned, eon, neon, nod, node, none, odd, ode, one



SUDOKU-GO!



KRISS KROSS



CODE NAME

Key word: Treadmill

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best Puzzles

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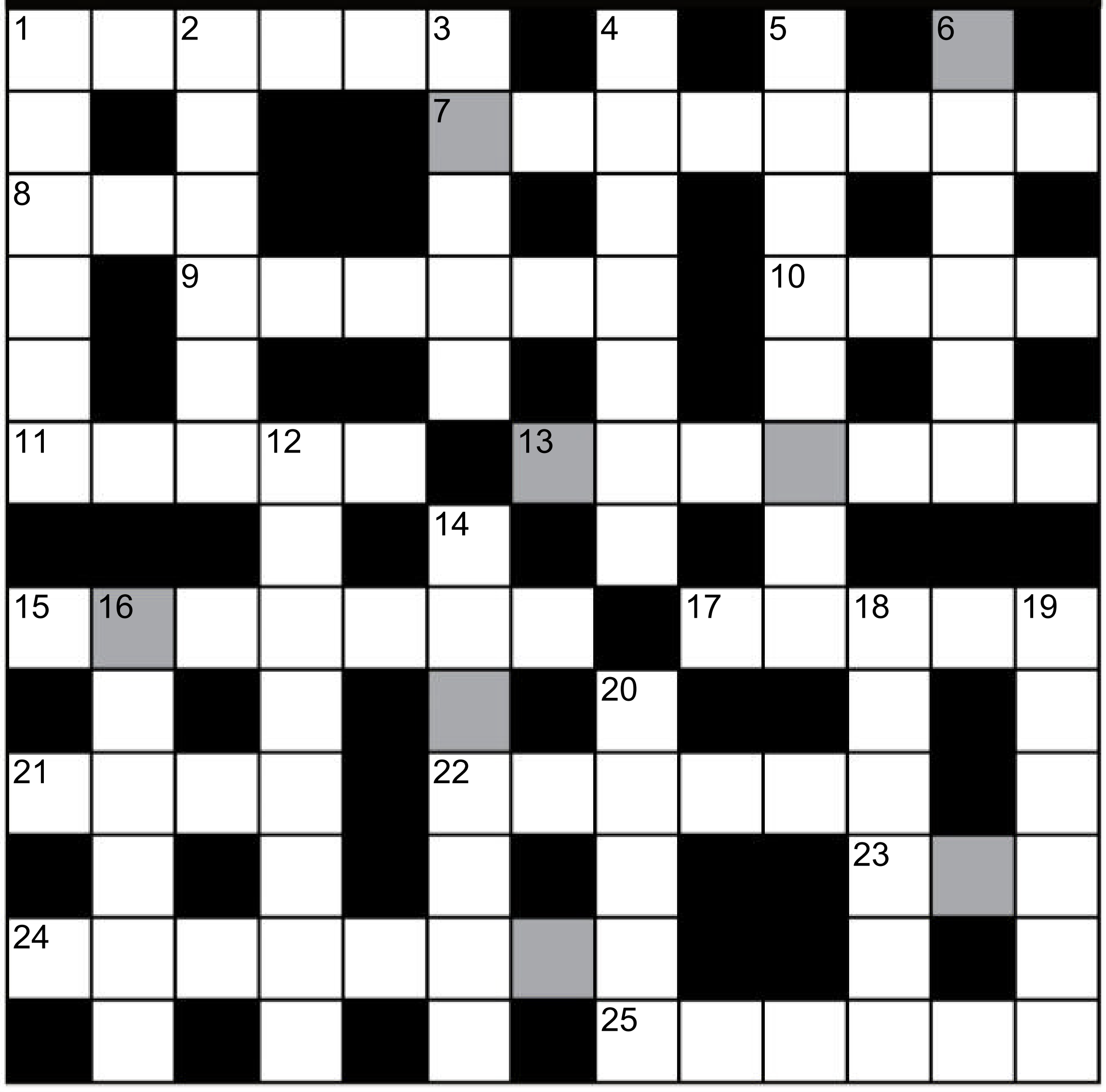
(calls cost 65p per minute plus your network access charge)†



ACROSS

1 Decorative strip of fabric (6)
7 Made better (8)
8 Enjoyable (3)
9 Writer (6)
10 Not at home (4)
11 Completely correct (5)
13 Written law (7)
15 Gift (7)
17 Range (5)
21 Upon (4)
22 Natural skill (6)
23 Frozen water (3)
24 Make; produce (8)
25 Celestial body (6)

DOWN

1 Safe place (6)
2 Yellow fruit (6)
3 Period of darkness (5)
4 Direct or control (7)
5 Relating to love (8)
6 Leave (6)
12 Person who buys goods (8)
14 Existing at the beginning (7)
16 Jogger (6)
18 Choice (6)
19 Regard as likely to happen (6)
20 Cease being awake (5)

Which London Underground line is coloured green?
The answer will appear in the shaded squares.

Phone and online entries open 3 January 2023 until midnight on 20 January 2023. Over 18s only. †Calls cost 65p per min plus your telephone company's network access charge, and should last no longer than 2 mins. Service provided by Spoke (0333 202 3390).

*For full T&Cs see below. We will use the information you supply to process your competition entry. For our privacy notice visit hearst.co.uk/privacy-notice.

One entry per household. Phone and online entries to reach us by closing date of 20 January 2023. Winners will be drawn at random from correct entries received by phone and online. Names and counties of winners available on request. No correspondence can be entered into. The editor's decision is final.

WINNING CHEQUES WILL BE MADE PAYABLE AND POSTED TO THE NAME AND ADDRESS PROVIDED IN THE PHONE ENTRY.

ANSWERS

MEGA CROSSWORD
47/48 2022
PRIZE ANSWER:
BILLIE EILISH
ACROSS
1 Access, **7** Hispanic, **8** Oil, **9** Useful, **10** Twin, **11** Donor, **13** Storage, **15** Trading, **17** Match, **21** Plan, **22** Eleven, **23** Dog, **24** Starting, **25** Horror

DOWN
1 Around, **2** Column, **3** Shift, **4** Isolate, **5** Bacteria, **6** Dining, **12** Ordinary, **14** Inherit, **16** Relate, **18** Tender, **19** Hunger, **20** Weigh

All puzzles are kindly supplied by Richardson Puzzles & Games. Their new Large Print Colour & Frame – Calm colouring book for adults contains 31 easy-colour illustrations with perforated page edges, so you can pull your artwork out of the book, then frame and display! Available to preorder now from hive.co.uk/richardson-puzzles and all other good book retailers.

RICHARDSON
PUZZLES & GAMES

NEW!
Large Print
Colour & Frame
Calm

Open to UK residents aged 18 and over. Entries in the incorrect format will not be considered. *best* competitions and puzzles open on 3 January 2023 and close at midnight on 20 January 2023. Entries received after the closing date will not be considered. The cash prizes are as described on this page [six winners]. The crossword winners will be randomly selected from the entries received. Entrants will be deemed to have accepted these Terms and to have agreed to be bound by them. This competition is not open to any employees of Hearst Magazines, the promoter or their immediate families, the promoter's advertising agency and sales promotion consultancy, or anyone else connected with the creation and administration of the competition. Only one competition entry, fulfilling the eligibility requirements above, will be accepted per person. Once selected, only the winners will be contacted personally by email using the contact details provided upon entry. Winners will be notified once selected. Winners will have five (5) working days to respond in full or another winner will be selected. Hearst Magazines' decision is final in every situation, including any not covered above and no correspondence will be entered into in respect of the validity of any such decision. Hearst Magazines shall be permitted to exclude or disqualify any entrant at any time at its sole discretion. Hearst Magazines reserves the right to exclude late, incomplete or multiple registrations, or registrations made by third parties or agents. Hearst Magazines does not accept any responsibility for late or lost entries. Proof of sending is not proof of receipt. The name of the winners will be available by sending a stamped addressed envelope to House of Hearst, 30 Panton Street, London SW1Y 4AJ, indicating the name of the competition. Entry to the competition and acceptance of the prize constitutes permission to use any entrant's name, image and any competition entry photograph, for promotional and/or editorial purposes in any format in print and non-print media without additional consultation. No purchase is necessary. Once entered, entries cannot be returned / withdrawn. Spammers will be disqualified. Prizes must be taken as stated and cannot be deferred although Hearst Magazines reserve the right to change the prize in the event of unforeseen circumstances. There will be no cash alternative. We will use the information you supply to process your competition entry. For our privacy notice visit hearst.co.uk/privacy-notice. Hearst Magazines reserves the right to (i) cancel and/or withdraw this competition and/or (ii) amend these Terms, at any time without notice. Where Hearst Magazines runs a competition with a promoter such that the promoter is responsible for the selection and/or the provision of prizes then Hearst Magazines shall not be responsible for or have any liability for the provision of such prizes. To the fullest extent permitted by applicable law, in no event will Hearst Magazines be liable, whether in contract, tort (including negligence), breach of statutory duty, or otherwise, for any loss, damage or injury arising under or in connection with this competition. These Terms are governed by English law, and entrants agree to submit to the exclusive jurisdiction of the English Courts in relation to all matters arising under or in connection with these Terms.

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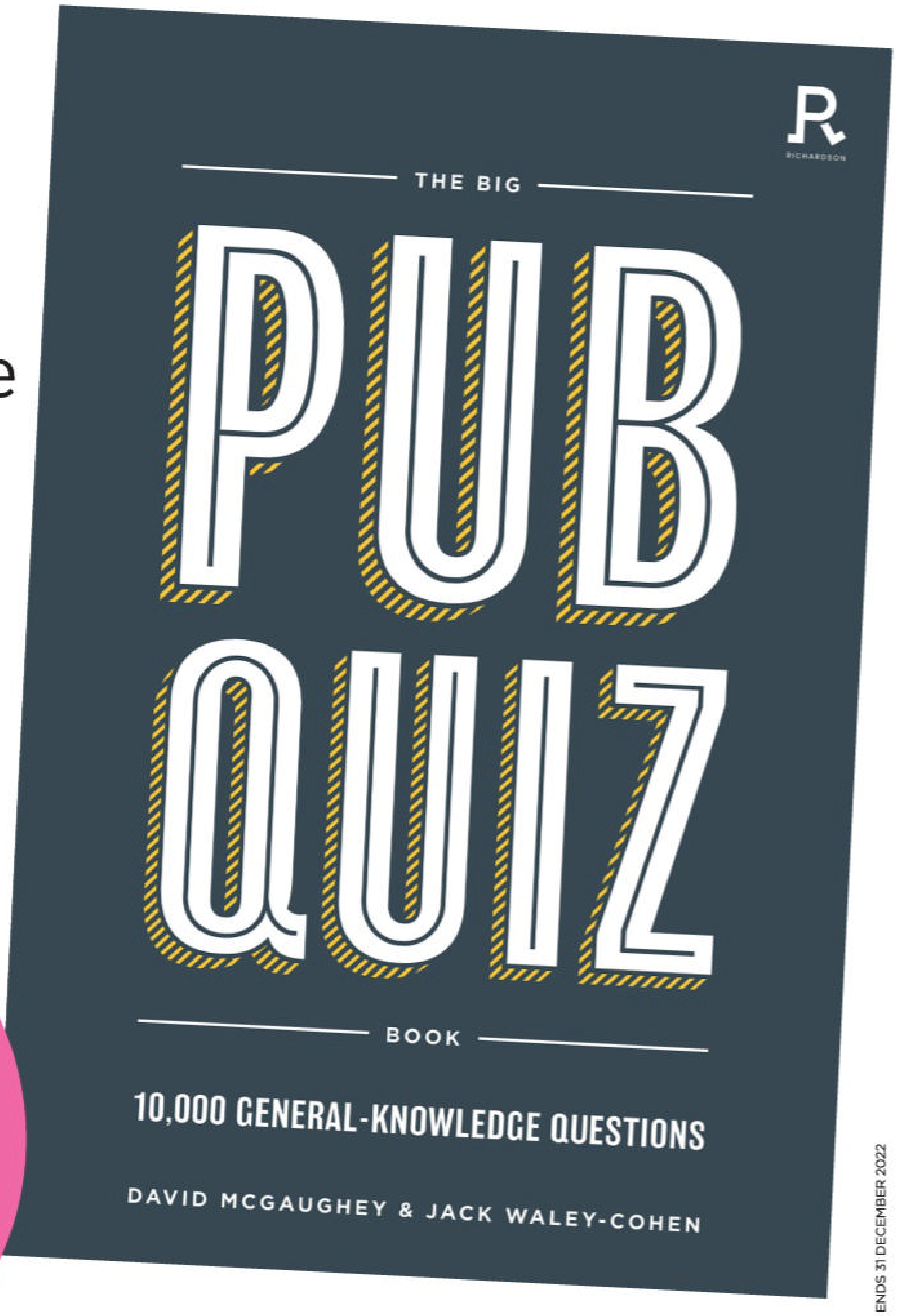
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Your stars

For the week 3-9 January with Russell Grant

CAPRICORN

22 December – 20 January

Capricorns like the Princess of Wales, and *Whiplash* actor and Oscar winner J.K. Simmons should trust their intuition when it comes to overhauling a big project. Diversifying their interests will protect them from and prepare them for any unexpected changes to come in the future.

AQUARIUS

21 January – 19 February

Sudden and fast changes are likely. This will lead to the start of something new in your life. A partner or loved one will make a surprise announcement. You have no control over their feelings or their decisions. They are doing what they feel is right for them. All you can do, for now is, go with the flow.

PISCES

20 February – 20 March

Entertaining family and friends could be more stressful than you thought. Is someone expecting you to pay for everything? A friend or relative is taking advantage of your kindness. If you cannot afford this, ask them to pay their share. Stop pushing yourself when you feel tired. Catch up on your sleep, later in the week.

ARIES

21 March – 20 April

A new personal journey is underway for you now. You will be filled with anticipation of what the year ahead might bring. It may be a while yet before it is in full swing, but arrangements are already underway that will bring big changes into your life. Now that these have begun, there will be no turning back.

TAURUS

21 April – 21 May

Plans under discussion will need further thought. It doesn't matter if someone is pushing you to make a commitment, ask for more time to consider it. Some answers will come to you in your dreams. Other possibilities will need investigating before you make up your mind. You always prefer to look before you leap.

GEMINI

22 May – 21 June

It may not feel like it at the moment, but you are making really good progress. It can be tough working on your own and it may take longer than expected to get the results you want, but stop beating yourself up because of this. Keep at it and a positive outlook will attract a golden opportunity.

CANCER

22 June – 23 July

The New Year sees you looking to take a new direction. You're serious about the resolutions you are making. Now the time has come to set new plans underway. It may feel strange, but this is a much-anticipated change. You have already given it a lot of thought and you know it is what you really want to do.

LEO

24 July – 23 August

Be the captain of your own ship. All you need to turn dreams into reality is the drive and determination to realise them. What's important is that you take the initiative. Don't let past disappointments hold you back. Let go of what has been. Taking up a new interest, hobby or sport will give you a new lease of life.

VIRGO

24 August – 23 September

It's nice to be in demand. Several social, job and travel opportunities will be on offer now. You don't have to accept every one of these but there are choices you will want to explore. Don't be insecure about your ability to improve your lifestyle. Think about an online course to fill in the gaps of your knowledge.

LIBRA

24 September – 23 October

Share your hopes and wishes with your partner or someone who is equally as close to you. They will happily take on a supporting role to help you realise your dreams. For every step you take, they will be there alongside you, encouraging you all the way. Exploring greener pastures will be fun for you both.

SCORPIO

24 October – 22 November

Trying to force an issue could lead to an unclear and confused situation. Give people time to form their own opinions rather than push them into making a decision they aren't ready for. Patience is key and timing is everything. Adjust your approach to meet other people's needs. Let your intuition guide you.

SAGITTARIUS

23 November – 21 December

What will be will be. The answers you seek may not be immediately apparent. Some things going on in your life will take time before the truth is revealed. Before making big decisions, pause and think it through. Check facts and information. Being thorough enables you to notice details you would not have seen had you rushed.

PICTURES: *BIGSTOCK*

And now for so

From a wellness festival to spectacles of light, here are a few

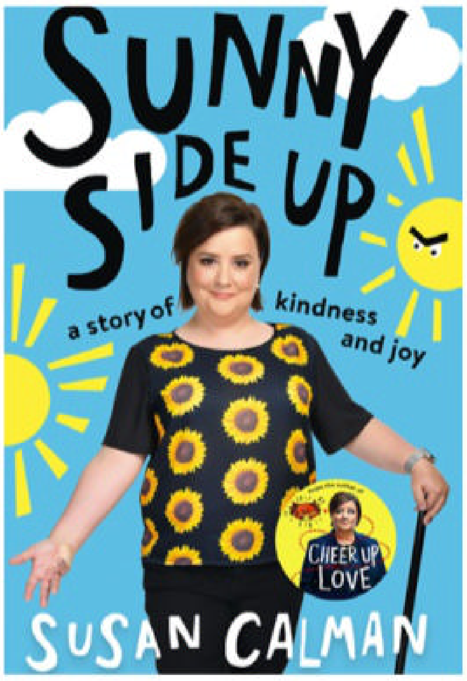
Perfect podcasts

BBC
MOTIVATE
ME MIX

GET MOVING

Radio 1 *Motivate Me Mix*

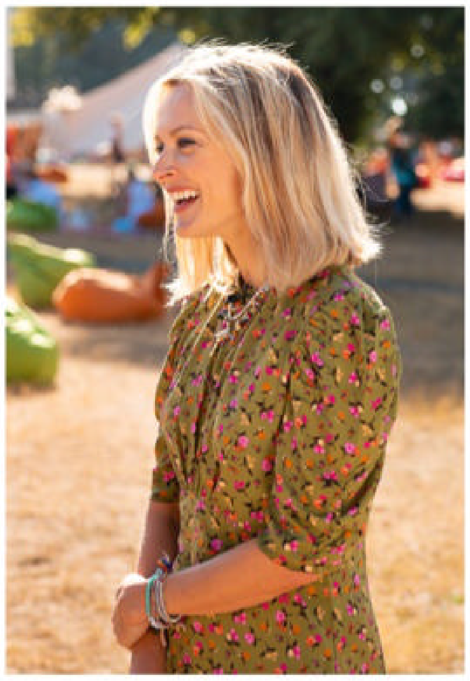
Sit back, relax and listen to inspirational tracks and mindfulness tips from a host of famous faces. VIPs – including *EastEnders* actor Bobby Brazier, boxer Josh Warrington and England Lioness Ella Toone – take it in turns to introduce their favourite hits and other things that keep their mind in the game. Not only do the half-hour episodes feature toe-tapping tunes that can become your best friend during workouts, they're also mood-boosting and get you pumped. **bbc.co.uk/sounds**



KEEP SMILING

Susan Calman
Sunny Side Up

The Scots comedian and broadcaster is on a one-woman mission to banish negativity and turn Great Britain into a nation of, if not exactly optimists, but those who see the bright side of life. Setting out to prove that kindness is a wonderful thing, this lovely listen is the sequel to her first book, *Cheer Up Love*. Punctuated by inspiring stories from others, she shows how much pleasure can be found in the little things in life. **Audible (30-day free trial)**



STAY HAPPY

Fearne Cotton –
Happy Place

The TV presenter turned mental health guru celebrated the 200th episode of her hit podcast last November. Along the way she's talked to incredible people about life, love, loss, body image and everything in between, as she reveals what happiness means to them. Guests have included Dave Grohl, Jada Pinkett Smith, Rylan and Richard E Grant. Hosted on Acast. **See play. acast.com/s/happy-place or your podcast app.**

BBC
THE MUSIC &
MEDITATION
PODCAST

CONFIDENCE TRICKS

The Music & Meditation Podcast

British R&B singer-songwriter Nao is on hand to guide listeners through a series of guided meditation podcasts, using music to help combat the everyday stresses we all experience. In the episode *Body Positivity with Megan Jayne Crabbe*, Nao is joined by the positive body influencer. Not only will Megan give her take on the ups and downs of body confidence, but she'll offer tips on how to boost yours. **bbc.co.uk/sounds**

me ‘me’ time...

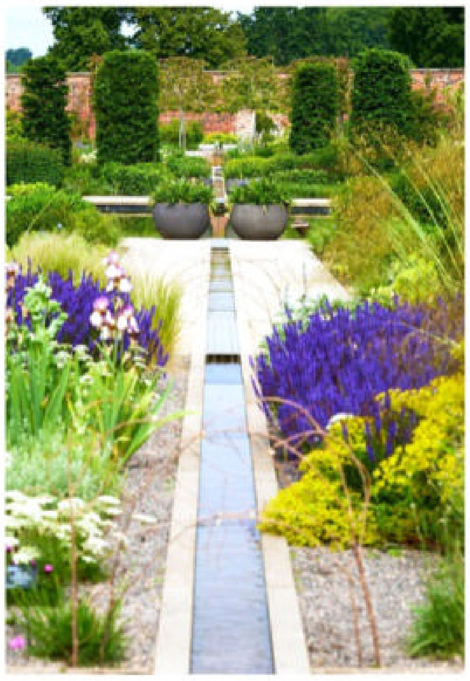
ideas to help you recharge those batteries for the new year...

Outdoor fun

SHINE ON

Spectacle of Light, Belvoir Castle. From 27 January

Discover the night-time wonder of Belvoir Castle, Leicestershire, through a wonderful spectacle of light and sound. Enjoy an illuminated trail through majestic woodland and around glorious gardens, under the stars... Explore stunning light installations, walk through the changing Light Curve, and immerse yourself in the Carpet of Colour and the amazing power of Paraluna. **Head to spectacleoflight.seetickets.com/timeslot/**



BLOOMING GORGEOUS

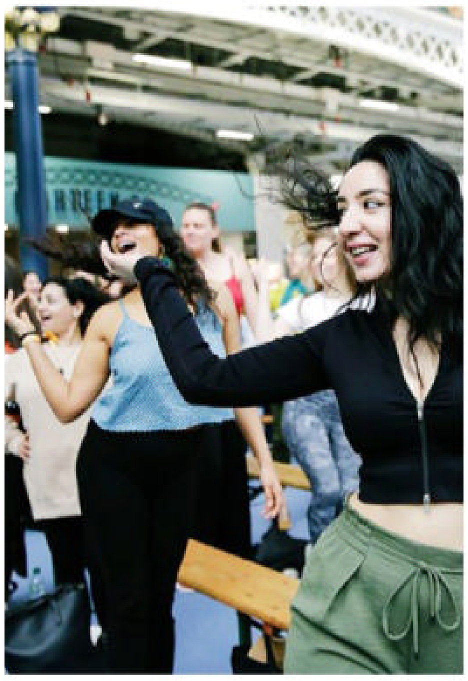
RHS Garden Bridgewater

This gorgeous garden in Worsley, Manchester, is the baby of the RHS, family, having opened its doors in May 2021 – and it’s blooming lovely. At 154 acres, it’s the first garden to be located in an urban area, and is full of wonderful features like the Chinese streamside garden, as well as the Paradise Garden and the Community Wellbeing area. **Prebooking is essential – and until May 2023 it is free entry on a Tuesday for Salford residents. Visit rhs.org.uk**

GO WILD

Walthamstow Wetlands

Let loose in East London at this untamed, wildlife-friendly site that offers more than 13 miles of paths to explore. Back in 2017, the local authorities opened the areas around the Walthamstow reservoirs, totally free of charge. (It was previously only open to anglers, birdwatchers and other hobby enthusiasts who’d got themselves a permit.) And thus, the wonderful Walthamstow Wetlands was born! **Visit wildlondon.org.uk/walthamstow-wetlands-nature-reserve**



WONDERFUL WEEKEND

Live Well London (18-20 March)

An experience like no other, this pop-up festival is dedicated to helping you become the very best version of yourself. From inspirational speakers to innovative new fitness techniques, there will be something for everyone. Explore the knowledge hub, science and nutrition stage the Move It main stage, vibe and flow yoga studio and The Retreat. Held over three days at Old Billingsgate Market. **Visit livewelllondon.com**

WORDS: *DANIELLE SOUTHWOOD* PICTURES: *GETTY IMAGES, INSTAGRAM*

Hobby New Year!

Pick up a new skill for 2023 on a short break in the UK

You too could be part of a tight-knit bunch!

WORDS: WENDY GOMERSALL
PICTURES: GETTY

WOOL I NEVER!

Unspun, pure, merino wool is very soft and stretchy and very easy to knit, which means you can create a snuggly blanket in no time – you don't even need needles as you use your arms on this course! Expert Courtney Love will show you how it's done on two-hour courses at The Tudor Farmhouse, Clearwell, in Gloucestershire. Absolutely no experience is required and you can choose what colour you'd like, too. Materials, plus tea, coffee and cakes, are supplied. Why not make a lovely mini-break of it and spend a few nights at the gorgeous Tudor Farmhouse, which has beautiful rooms and an excellent restaurant. Double rooms from £167 per night, including breakfast, tudorfarmhousehotel.co.uk

BOOK IT: Courses from £75pp, scheduled to run on dates including 4 March, 29 April and 7 October at The Tudor Farmhouse; thechunkyneedle.com/workshops/tudor

The stunning Tudor Farmhouse

A luxury stay awaits at stylish Malmaison

Indulge in a deliciously fun chocolate workshop

HOT CHOC

Manchester's Malmaison hotel, in a former 19th-century warehouse in the city centre, hosts The Original Chocolate Making Workshop from My Chocolate, with experiences perfect for chocoholics, delivered by theatrical chocolatiers. An introduction to the art of chocolate-making, participants learn, over two hours, about all things chocolate-related and practise fresh cream truffle-making and giant chocolate slab crafting and marbling, with such yummies as white chocolate shards and crunchy honeycomb. Courses are also available in London and Brighton. Do stay the night at the extraordinarily stylish Malmaison while you're here – rates for double rooms with breakfast vary widely, depending on date, malmaison.com/manchester

BOOK IT: Courses from £50pp; for dates and more information, visit mychocolate.co.uk

Get creative with ceramics...

...using the Raku technique

GO POTTY

Create a stunning ceramic pot for your home. Two-and-a-half-hour Raku pottery introduction courses, with experienced ceramicist Tez Roberts, are on offer at Humble by Nature; TV presenter Kate Humble's thriving rural skills centre, near Monmouth, South Wales. The Japanese pottery-decorating technique allows you to choose which glazes and colours you'd like to use. Self-catering accommodation is available at the farm – two-bedroom cottage The Piggery sleeping four and The Hayloft, a studio flat for two. Prices vary.

BOOK IT: Courses from £65pp are scheduled to run on dates in May, June and September, humblebynature.com

PASTY PASTIME

Budding bakers can cook up a storm in Truro

Learn how to make yummy Cornish pasties (meat or vegetarian) using a treasured family recipe at the Philleigh Way Cookery School near Truro, Cornwall. You get to take your creations home, with perfectly crimped pastry edges, and the two-and-a-half-hour course includes traditional Cornish cream tea. For a range of nearby accommodation, try booking.com

BOOK IT: Courses from £55pp and scheduled to run on 25 January, 15 February, 15 March; philleighway.co.uk

DON'T MISS THE FEBRUARY ISSUE

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RESERVE YOUR PLACE ON THIS BARGAIN HALF-BOARD BREAK

See the wonders of WALES by mountain railway

Ride the Snowdon Mountain and Welsh Highland railways, explore Gwydir Castle and visit beautiful gardens

North Wales is blessed with some truly outstanding scenery, from the mountains of Snowdonia to the seascapes of Llandudno and Anglesey. This five-day trip is a fantastic way to take in these landscapes as you travel aboard two heritage railways and visit historic buildings with beautiful gardens.

You'll ride the Snowdon Mountain Railway with panoramic views over Snowdonia National Park and the Welsh Highland Railway, plus you'll enjoy a trip to the Plas Cadnant Hidden Gardens.

The ancient Gwydir Castle is another highlight – you'll wander through 500 years of history on a guided tour.

Reasons to book

VISIT PLAS CADNANT HIDDEN GARDENS

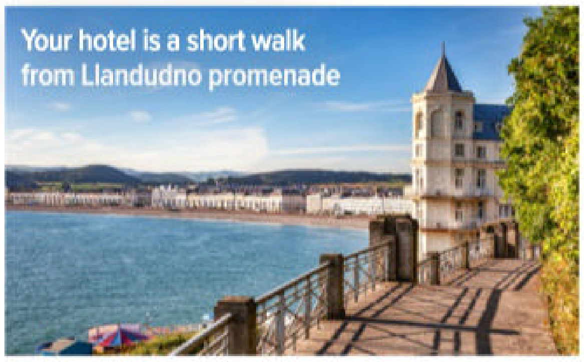
An overgrown, abandoned wilderness until its stunning revival 25 years ago, these gardens are often compared to Cornwall's The Lost Gardens of Heligan.

LOVELY LLANDUDNO

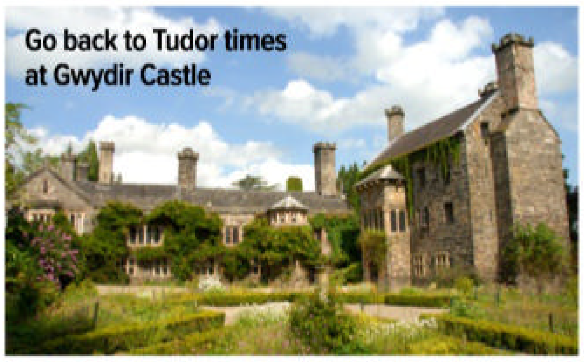
Your base for this trip is Llandudno Bay Hotel, a four-star hotel just a stone's throw from the beach.

SCENIC RAILWAY RIDES

You'll take two heritage railway journeys, on board the Snowdon Mountain Railway and the Welsh Highland Railway.



Your hotel is a short walk from Llandudno promenade



Go back to Tudor times at Gwydir Castle

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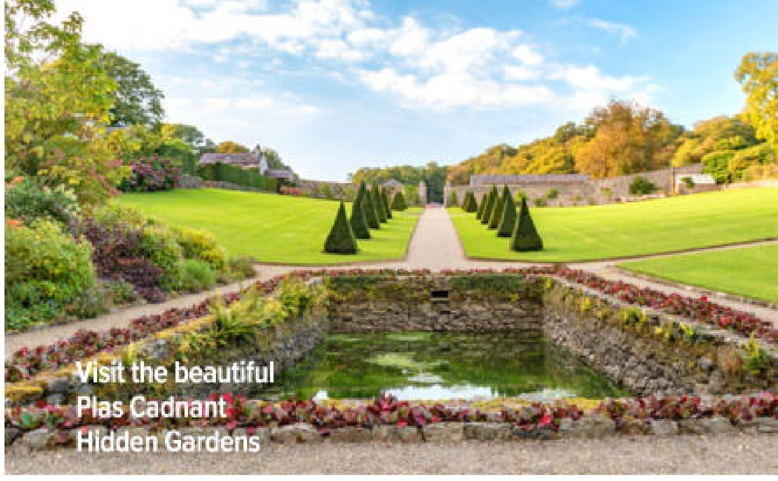

Visit the beautiful Plas Cadnant Hidden Gardens

YOUR ITINERARY

DAY 1 Llandudno **DAY 2** Plas Cadnant Hidden Gardens and Snowdon Mountain Railway **DAY 3** Gwydir Castle and the Welsh Highland Railway **DAY 4** Bodnant Garden and Bodrhyddan Hall **DAY 5** Departure

YOU WILL GET THE CHANCE TO...

- Ride aboard the stunning Snowdon Mountain Railway to Clogwyn.
- Explore the fascinating Plas Cadnant Hidden Gardens on a guided tour.
- Discover the 500-year history of the Tudor Gwydir Castle.
- Take a scenic mountain train ride on the Welsh Highland Railway.
- Stroll the beautiful Bodnant Garden with its wildflower meadows and riverside gardens.
- Stay for four nights in the four-star Llandudno Bay Hotel overlooking the town's promenade, on a half-board basis.
- Enjoy a guided tour of Bodrhyddan Hall, one of the few remaining family-owned stately homes in Wales.

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for more details and the full itinerary

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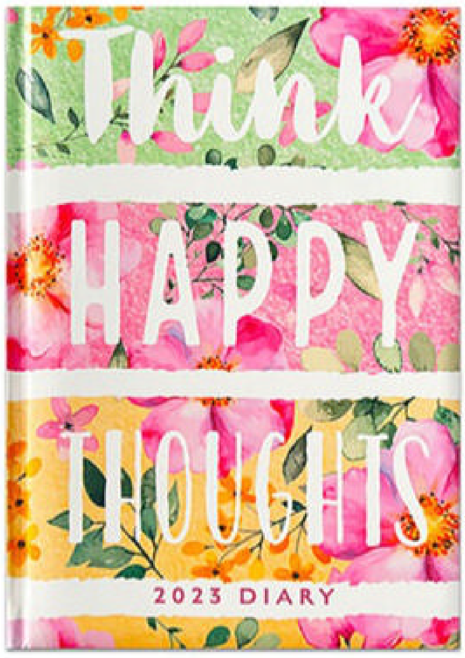

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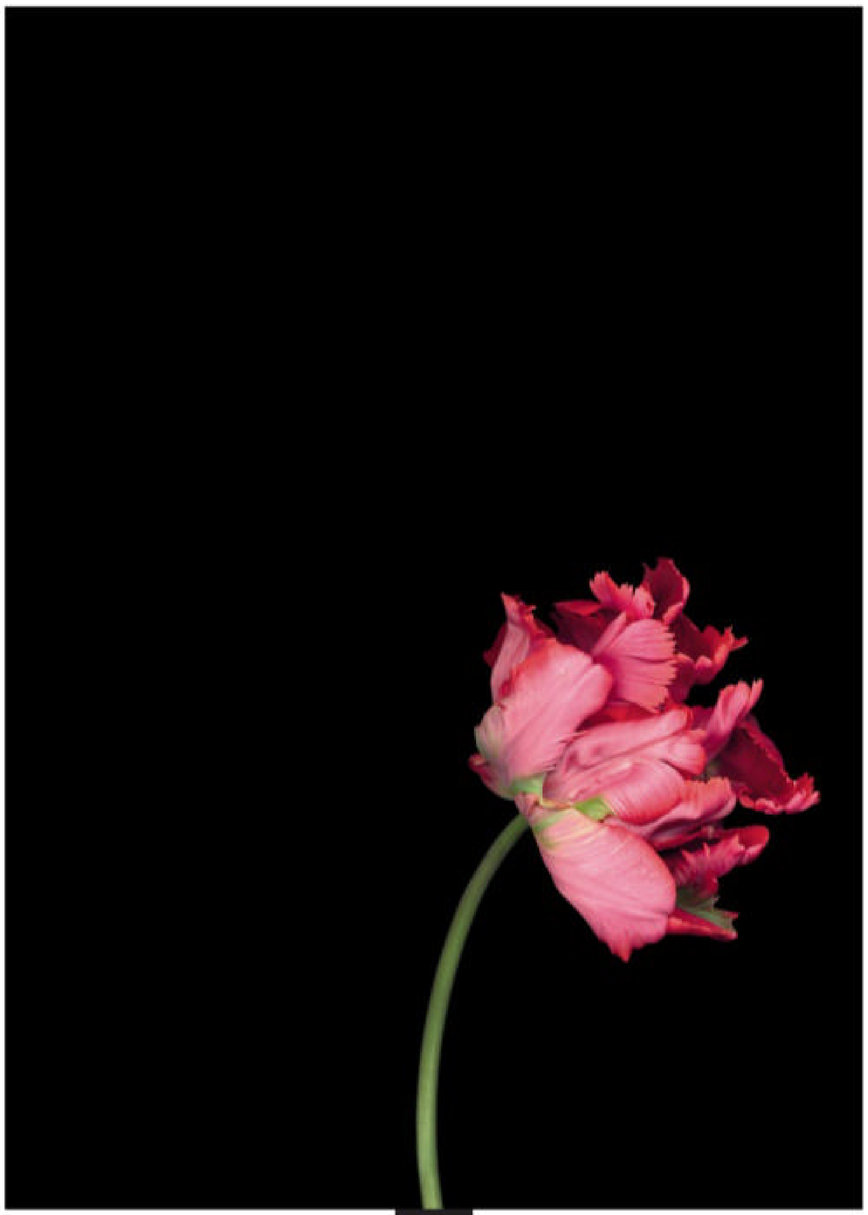

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